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From the Author

SCS #1432

REMARKS
ON
CERTAIN OPINIONS
RECENTLY PROPAGATED,
RESPECTING
UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION,
AND
OTHER TOPICS
CONNECTED WITH THAT SUBJECT.

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TO THE
REV. ANDREW THOMSON, D. D.
MINISTER OF ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH:
THE FOLLOWING VOLUME,
AS A TOKEN OF ESTEEM
FOR
HIS PRIVATE VIRTUES,
AND
THE SIGNAL SERVICES, WHICH HE HAS RENDERED TO THE
CAUSE OF HUMANITY, LEARNING, AND RELIGION;
IS INSCRIBED
BY HIS SINCERE FRIEND AND SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.



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PREFACE.

WITH the Scriptures in our hands, which are so plain that he who runs may read them; and after the many years that have passed over the Church; it might have been expected that all controversy amongst the real friends of religion would now have been closed; that they would have been agreed upon the essential doctrines of Christianity; and would have been distinguished for the unity of their faith, and of their knowledge of the Son of God.

But never have reasonable expectations been more completely frustrated. Every year is teeming with crude theories, and wild and visionary notions upon the most sacred and deeply interesting doctrines of revelation: and in proportion as these speculations are opposed to the letter and spirit of the oracles of God, they are advanced with the greater boldness, and urged with the more vehemence and pertinacity.

When the world lies in wickedness; when such multitudes are rapidly rushing on to eternity, regardless

of the infinitely momentous realities before them; and our own life is so short and uncertain: it is lamentable to find, what we fondly hope is the house of God, divided against itself; and to see the time and attention of one portion of the servants incessantly withdrawn from their nobler duties and more useful employments, to defend the property of their Master from the attacks of another class of the domestics. But however irksome, this is a task which we are not at liberty to decline. All his goods are precious. Every part of revealed truth is invaluable. Coming from the God of love, and fitted to raise those who embrace it to the knowledge and enjoyment of himself: we are bound to contend for its preservation and purity; to guard it with fidelity and zeal; and never surrender it to any of its assailants.

The opinions opposed in the following pages, are of a most dangerous description. Though repugnant to the dictates of inspiration; they have met, in some quarters, with a far more ready reception than could have been anticipated: so that, though controversy is at all times unpleasant, it is strongly imperative on the friends of sound religion, to point out the fallacy of the tenets in question, and put the public upon their guard against their pernicious tendency.

Though the work is short, it is longer than was either intended or wished. To avoid swelling the volume, many topics have been omitted, and others treated with more brevity, than perhaps was consistent with perspicuity. The reader, however, who is desirous of more information upon the subjects dis-

cussed, will find his labour amply rewarded by consulting the writings of other authors. The Rev. James Carlile of Dublin, in his *Old Doctrine of Faith*, has given a learned and elaborate refutation of the notion that faith consists in an assent to the truth. Mr Innes, in his *Origin and Permanence of Christian Joy*, has very judiciously shewn the necessity of faith in order to salvation, and the impropriety of making consciousness the evidence of our believing. Dr Barr, in his *Sermon on the Peace of Believing*, has in a masterly manner proved, that the Antinomian assurance of salvation is unattainable, unnecessary, and injurious. Mr Brotherston in his *Brief View of Faith*, and a Minister of the Church of Scotland, in a letter to Thomas Erskine, Esq. on his work, entitled *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel*; have treated the principal topics in debate, with great clearness and conclusiveness. Since these pages went to the press, Mr Barclay of Irvine has published some useful *Strictures on the same subject*. Mr Mason's (of Wishawtown) *Observations, Doctrinal and Practical, on Saving Faith*, are truly excellent. A more enlarged view of *Saving Faith* may be found in Dr Colquhoun's work under that title. Fuller on the *Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation*, and Scott on the *Warrant and Nature of Faith*, deserve to be carefully studied. But those who have leisure and opportunity will find their pains still more richly recompensed by the perusal of Brown of Wamphray on *Justification*, Edwards' admirable *Work on the Affections*, and Owen's incomparable volume on *Redemption*, or *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*.

May the Lord in mercy bless the means employed for scattering ignorance, error, and vice; hasten the time when the people shall be all righteous; when the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of his glory; and when the multitudes of them that believe, shall be of one heart and of one soul, and keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

W. H.

STRATHBLANE MANSE,
Jan. 4th, 1830.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE DIFFERENT IDEAS ENTERTAINED OF THE WAY OF SALVATION.

IN journeying from mount Hor, along the coast of the Red Sea, to avoid entering the land of Edom; the peevish and discontented Israelites, soon lost patience, in consequence of the fatigues and privations attending this retrograde movement. Their soul was much discouraged because of the way: and, perpetually prone to murmur, they broke out in bitter repinings against God, and reproachful invectives against Moses.

It was seldom that their rebellious and provoking conduct was so quickly and so severely chastised. Fiery flying serpents were instantly sent among the people, many of whom were mortally bitten. This mark of the Divine displeasure speedily roused them to consideration and brought them to repentance. “Therefore the people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against thee: pray unto the Lord that he take away the serpents from among us. And Moses prayed for

the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live." Num. xxi. 4—8.

This appointment seems as plain as language could render it; and as kind and effectual as grace and power could make it. It might have been expected that it would have been hailed in the camp as the result of the matchless benignity of the God of love; that the import of the instructions, with which it was accompanied, would have been easily comprehended; and that no difficulty could have been found to direct the next individual who was wounded, how to counteract the venom of the sting, and secure the restoration of his health.

But when circulated amongst ignorant rash speculative and perverse men, the clearest counsels are easily misunderstood, and the most benevolent intentions of Heaven frustrated.

As the tidings were conveyed along the encampment, some of the more reckless and audacious transgressors might affirm that this measure was a perfect hoax; that God could as easily extirpate the fiery serpents as endow this brazen figure with a power to cure their bite; since the real serpents were still permitted to plague them, they were persuaded that the brazen serpent was possessed of no virtue at all; and that, whatever others might do, and let the consequences be what they

would, they were determined never to look in the direction where it stood.

The metaphysicians would be very anxious to analyse the Divine institution, and ascertain exactly the circumstance on which its efficacy depended. Some of them might contend that its miraculous power consisted solely in its substance, some in its shape, and others in its position.

Some might assert that the cure proceeded wholly from the vision, and would be greatly affected by the manner in which the image was viewed.

If our opticians had lived in those days, they could have expatiated eloquently upon the value of their instruments; and have enlightened and edified the congregation by telling them how wondrously the process would be facilitated by the aid of their glasses.

And the medical faculty might have insisted that the recovery of the patients would be mightily promoted by having them first properly leeches blistered and bandaged.

Such a notion as this would be extremely offensive to some of their more methodical and sensitive brethren. These would maintain that such an opinion was high treason against the generosity of God, and an insult to the power and all sufficiency of the provision which he had employed. They would urge that the eye had nothing to do with their recovery. One would assert that

there was no need of looking to the serpent at all. It was enough merely to know that such an image existed, and that it was reared for the cure of those who were stung. And another, improving, as he fancied, upon this idea, would allege that such was the nature of the antidote, and such the freeness with which its blessings were dispensed, that there was no necessity for even turning their eyes towards it: that it had already made them all perfectly whole. As it was raised into the air, it had sucked up all the poison of the winged reptiles, and deprived their stings of venom. The only thing necessary to preserve their health, was just to believe that they were perfectly cured. While they persevered in this persuasion, they were safe: but the moment that they began to doubt or to deny their complete restoration to health, they would bring back all the virulence of the fatal bite, and accumulate on themselves the horrors of delirium and death. “Oh how lamentable is it to hear the people still talking of their wounds and pain, of their fears and dangers! Where is their faith in the testimony of God, that the brazen serpent is an antidote to the fiery flying serpents? What more can the congregation wish than to know that an antidote has been provided? What prevents them from being all in perfect health and soundness? Have no materials been obtained for the antidote? Has the artificial serpent not been cast? Has the image not been reared on the pole? Has it not been

endowed with an all-healing virtue from on high? When it was planted there, it carried aloft all your complaints and sufferings: and you may strain your eyes as you please, your utmost efforts can make things neither better nor worse: for you were all cured before you were bitten: and the only thing that can kill you, is to call this in question."

It was to no purpose to reason or remonstrate with the authors of this opinion; and to affirm that, since the Divine instructions spoke of looking, the eyes must be of some service; and that if the wounded refused to use them, they would forego the possibility of a cure.

In their overbearing zeal for the honour of the image, these systematizers might reply, that the brazen figure was all in all. If it never had been formed, nothing could have cured them. If it were annihilated, no antidote could be found for their malady: and, therefore, it was plain that their health depended solely on the brass. No matter whether they used their eyes or not; the brazen figure had already made them perfectly well: and nothing could bring back the dangers attendant on the stings of the reptiles, but a doubt or denial of their perfect health and safety.

By our fatal apostacy from God we have forfeited all right to heaven and everlasting bliss; sunk into depravity and vice; incurred the displeasure of the Most High, and exposed our-

selves to all the miseries of never-ending woe. But the God of love in his rich unsearchable mercy, compassion and grace, has made the most ample and astonishing provision in behalf of all who will only apply and use it, for their free and complete deliverance from wretchedness and ruin, and their restoration to his image and favour, and their admission into eternal glory. This is by the mission and mediation of his own Son. "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

As many of the Israelites as, disregarding vain janglings and metaphysical disquisitions, when they found themselves wounded by a serpent; in obedience to the Divine command, and in reliance upon the Divine promise, turned their eyes towards the serpent of brass, were instantly cured. No state, no stage of the attack was beyond its reach. "Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole: and it came to pass, that, if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." Those, however, who trifled with their danger, or disregarded the Di-

vine institution, must have suffered the consequences. They must have languished in misery till death cut them down.

In every age, all those, who, from a discovery of their guilt and perdition, and a conviction of the power and grace of Christ to save them to the uttermost, that come to God by him; have renounced their own righteousness, trusted simply and entirely to his righteousness for pardon and acceptance, and made him all their salvation and all their desire; all these have been saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: while those, who, either from ignorance of his righteousness, or from hostility to this plan of saving mercy, have gone about to establish a righteousness of their own; have been left to wonder and perish.

The gospel scheme of salvation manifests the most unbounded generosity and love; and seems uncommonly plain and intelligible. It is stripped of all ambiguity; brought down to the level of the lowest; and rendered so distinct and clear, that he who runs may read it. The Bible tells us that Christ is the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world; that he is the way, the truth, and the life; that he is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; that his righteousness is unto all, and upon all them that believe; and that salvation is of faith, that it might be grace.

More perspicuous language could not have been employed. But however plain and obvious,

the ill-directed labours of men have encompassed the path of life with doubts and difficulties; have introduced suspicion and perplexity, where all was previously bright and clear; and spread the gloom of uncertainty and darkness over regions of the purest light, and the most attractive loveliness.

Like the audacious infidels in the camp of Israel, the graceless treat the whole with the most imperturbable indifference and insulting contempt. Though their souls are at stake, and an awful eternity is rapidly rushing on; in spite of all the remonstrances of reason, and the strongest exhortations of Scripture, they care for none of these things, but obstinately slumber on and take their rest, till endless darkness and destruction surround them.

Like the opticians, whose existence we have supposed, the papists prohibit the examination of the Scriptures, and forbid us to look at the Saviour with our own eyes. They require us to take our creed upon trust; and enjoin us to view the great Redeemer only through the dim and distorting medium of their own inventions, and the fancied traditions of the fathers.

Like the benevolent physicians in the congregation, the legalists dare not confide in God's simple, free, and generous plan. They impose on their votaries a long and painful preparatory process. Instead of directing them at once to the Lamb of God, they exact a tedious course of moral reformation and religious exercises: and it

is only after they have succeeded in dressing them out in the garb of self-righteous duties and observances, that they venture to encourage hope, or speak to them of the Saviour. They block up the road to Calvary with so many obstacles, as to render the path impassible, and the cross inaccessible; and, in direct opposition to the instructions of Scripture, instead of holding up Christ as the end of the law for righteousness, send men upon the impracticable task, to work out a righteousness of their own.

The prototypes of the Sandemanians were found in those who affirmed that there was no occasion to look at the brazen serpent; that it was enough to know that such a figure existed; and that it was erected for the benefit of those who were bitten by the fiery flying serpents. The essence of saving faith, on their hypothesis, consists in believing that Christ died for the ungodly. The moment that a sinner is convinced of this, he is a believer. In perceiving this truth, the mind is no more active than in perceiving the light that blazes before the eye, or the sound that rattles in the ear. Divine truth carries its own evidence along with it; and the simple declaration, Christ died for the ungodly, is a sufficient ground of hope to every one who believes it, without any thing wrought in him or done by him, to give it a particular direction to himself. To seek comfort from evidences of grace, is the effect of ignorance, and the work of a legal unbelieving spirit. There is acceptance with God

for sinners, while sinners, without any act, exercise, or exertion of their mind whatever; and consequently before repentance. The passive belief of this quiets the guilty conscience, begets hope, and lays the foundation for love. If the man can infer his own interest in Christ from the general language of the gospel, it is well. But if its general declarations will not satisfy him respecting his own salvation, he must be content to go without assurance; for the gospel contains no other provision for his personal comfort.

This system is commendable for its strenuous efforts to suppress the prevalence of self-righteousness. No principle is more hostile to the grace of the gospel, and more ruinous to the soul, than legality. Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid already, which is Christ Jesus. Our character and condition by nature are most vile, wretched, and deplorable. We are altogether as an unclean thing; and dead in trespasses and sins. And, until we are brought to discover our total depravity and absolute ruin, and led cordially to renounce all for the righteousness of Christ; we are utterly disinclined to welcome the provisions of redeeming mercy, and alike disqualified to relish the grace, and enjoy the blessings of the great salvation. In such a case, notwithstanding the unparalleled compassion, kindness, and liberality of the Son of God,

we must labour on under the burden of guilt and condemnation, till we sink into perdition.

It is, therefore, impossible to lay too firm a restraint upon this God-dishonouring and soul-ruining principle: and so far as Sandemanianism is calculated to expose its criminality, and counteract its danger, it is entitled to praise.

But, if not the sole, this, at the utmost, is the principal recommendation which it possesses. It is at once chargeable with many defects, and beset with insurmountable difficulties.

No system can be true unless it correspond with the whole doctrines of revelation. But by branding the exercise of self-examination as legal and ruinous, it places itself in flat and complete opposition to the letter and spirit of every injunction, which God has given to search and try our ways, to prove our own work, to judge ourselves lest we be condemned of the Lord; and to examine ourselves, to prove our own selves, whether we be in the faith.

By representing faith as a perception of the truth, or a passive reception of the testimony of God, it destroys the obligation of sinners to believe on Christ. If the mind is passive in receiving the truth, it is the misfortune and not the fault of any who are destitute of the perception of what God has testified. Unbelief is deprived of guilt, and the infidel cannot be justly condemned for not believing on the Son of God.

This system treats man as if he were all reason

and intellect. It makes no provision for the prodigious influence which the affections exercise over the operations of our minds, the choice of our wills, and the pursuits in which we engage. The stiffness and frigidity of this system are frightfully unlike that disclosed in the pages of inspiration, where love reigns supreme; where affection pervades every part, and forms the life and soul of all; where we are taught to love God because he first loved us; where the love of Christ constrains us to live to him, who died for us, and rose again; and where we are told, that when prophecies shall fail, when tongues shall cease, and knowledge shall vanish away, love shall retain its blissful power, and bind the heart of the believer more firmly to the God of grace.

When we hear the Apostles rejoicing in the hope laid up for them in heaven; declaring that they knew in whom they had believed; and that they lived by faith on him who loved them, and gave himself for them: it is melancholy to hear the Sandemanians affirm that the gospel contains no other provision for personal comfort than the general statements that Christ is the propitiation for sin, and died for the ungodly. It is painful to find them maintaining that this is all that, in the present world, we can know of our everlasting state; and that we must leave all certainty about our future condition till death decide it. And it is strange that they can succeed in schooling down

their disciples to perfect apathy on a matter of infinite magnitude and endless duration.

In attempting to drive men out of self-righteousness, this system unfortunately stops before it shuts them up to the righteousness of Christ. The bare belief that there was a brazen serpent, could not cure a single Israelite. To secure their recovery, the wounded were obliged to look towards it. And the mere belief that Jesus is the Son of God, and that for his sake God justifies the ungodly, is no more than what devils admit into their creed; and can no more save one of Adam's race than a fallen angel. Could such a cold and unfeeling assent to the truth land any man in heaven, very few would be lost. For, with the exception of deists and atheists, all the inhabitants of Christendom believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners. In such a case the language of revelation would be reversed; and we should say, Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to life, and many there be who go in thereat.

This hypothesis is designed to overturn the errors of legality: but there is no scheme which more effectually cherishes a self-righteous spirit. There are few publications in the English language which indicate greater insensibility, hard-heartedness, and self-sufficiency, than the letters of Mr Sandeman. And the pride with which Sandemanians contemplate their own superior discernment, and the bitter contempt and scorn

which they express for the supposed ignorance and legality of others, give sad cause to suspect that their imaginary knowledge and orthodoxy are the righteousness on which their hearts are resting.

Those Jews who maintained that there was no necessity for looking at the brazen serpent, and that if they would only believe that it had already cured them, they would find that they were all perfectly well, might be considered as the exemplars of the modern Bereans. The Berean hypothesis was originally intended to be an antidote to the Sandemanian scheme. Of late, however, the two systems, in the most important articles, have been brought to exact agreement.

The substance of this multifarious system may be comprehended in the following propositions. God, for Christ's sake, loves every human creature, and has redeemed all by the death of his Son. As it is only for the sake of the atonement that any iniquity is forgiven, and the atonement was complete on the day that Jesus died, the sins of the whole world were all pardoned then, and every child of Adam succeeds by birth to an interest in Christ, and all the blessings of his salvation. Saving faith is the knowledge or belief of the truth, that Christ is the propitiation for sin, that he died for the ungodly, that God loves us, has redeemed and pardoned us. Justification is the knowledge or belief that we are redeemed and

pardoned. Since all men are born with an interest in Christ, and the sins of the whole world were forgiven when Jesus died, it is as absurd to pray for mercy, pardon, an interest in Christ and similar blessings, as to pray for our creation, the formation of the sun and moon, or the communication of gravity to matter.

The assurance of salvation is absolutely inseparable from the existence of faith, and is derived entirely from the direct testimony of God, that Christ is the propitiation for sin, that he died for the ungodly, and that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. This testimony contains not only a warrant to believe, but also an assurance of our interest in Christ, and of our personal salvation. If a man assents to this testimony, and yet doubts his own salvation, he not only acts an absurd and irrational part, but actually makes God a liar. If the direct testimony of God, in his word, is insufficient to give full personal assurance of salvation, then the gospel cannot be good tidings of great joy to all people. A man wishes to have peace to his mind in the knowledge that his sins are forgiven, and that he is accepted before God. But if instead of being delivered from his agitation and perplexity by the gospel record, he must examine his frames and feelings, his graces and virtues; then the gospel fails of its design. It is not the message which he needs: for he is labour-

ing under a distress from which it is unable to relieve him. But this is a supposition dishonourable to the all-sufficiency of the gospel.

To set a believer a searching for evidence of his interest in Christ, is a most mischievous practice. It withdraws the mind from the simple truth. It introduces legality; unsettles the Christian's confidence; destroys his comfort; and places his peace upon an unstable and shifting foundation of sand, instead of leaving it to rest upon the direct testimony of God, which would fix his feet upon the Rock of ages.

It is to the examination of these assertions that the following pages are principally devoted.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE FREENESS OF THE GOSPEL AND ON THE
LOVE OF GOD.

IN the camp of Israel the opticians were wrong, who itinerated with their instruments, to aid the vision of those who were bitten; and the physicians were as far from being right, who discouraged the wounded from looking to the brazen serpent, till they were thoroughly bled or blistered, and properly dressed and bandaged. Those men could not be too much commended, who endeav-

oured to prevent every addition to the Divine injunction; who laboured to strip it of all ambiguity and misapprehension; and who exhorted their suffering brethren to comply with the directions exactly as God had given them, and to look at once, and just as they were, to the serpent lifted up on the pole.

And after the scriptures are replenished with the most bright and overbearing attestations to the precious and soul-saving truth, that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, and appointed for salvation to the ends of the earth, every man is entitled to our warmest gratitude, who exerts himself to secure the purity of revealed truth; and clear the gospel call from every restraint impediment and clog, with which some, in their well-meant, but mistaken zeal to promote its safety, and ensure its success, have unhappily loaded it. This seems to be the design of the Bereans. Tenderly alive to the glory of Divine grace, and terrified lest, if the vestige of a condition of salvation were left in the christian system, it would bring back the reign of legal toil and terror; in order to vindicate the absolute gratuitousness of this dispensation of mercy, they have thought it necessary to reject the idea, that faith is a condition of pardon and acceptance, and to maintain, that by the death of Christ every sin is forgiven; and the whole world restored to the favour of God.

Here it must be observed, that no man, who

knows his bible, will venture to affirm that faith is possessed of the slightest merit, or an equivalent for the smallest spiritual blessing. But from the unvarying language of revelation, it is equally undeniable that faith is the beginning of religion; that it is by faith that the soul is united to Christ, and interested in his salvation. Faith is the line which separates a state of nature from a state of grace. The man who is without faith, has no union to Christ, no enjoyment of the gospel, no right to heaven, no meetness for everlasting happiness; and, if he die in that condition, he must be eternally undone. This faith is the gift of God, and wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Labour is the meritorious condition for the hireling's receiving his wages; and the price, which the buyer pays down, is the meritorious condition of obtaining the article which he purchases. But it is difficult to conceive how the patient's taking the physician's prescripton, can be denominated the meritorious condition of his cure; the beggar's accepting alms can be called the condition of the donation; or the heirs' entering on his father's estate, can be styled the meritorious condition of his inheritance. And when it is by faith that the diseased soul submits to the treatment of the Almighty Physician, the perishing sinner accepts the unspeakable gift of God, and the indigent and starving children of Adam take possession of the unsearchable riches of Christ; it is impossible to see the propriety of representing

this act of the soul as a legal term, or meritorious condition of salvation; especially when faith itself is as really conferred by God as the crown of life.

If the absolute gratuitousness of the gospel is endangered or impaired by the presence of a condition, by which the soul is connected with Christ, translated from darkness to light, and put in possession of his salvation; this fatal effect is produced as completely by their own scheme as that of their opponents. They retain a condition in their own system. For though they assert that every man is redeemed, pardoned, and interested in Christ; they deny that all men are saved. There is no salvation, they affirm, until we are justified; but no man can be justified till he believes that his soul is safe. Though the pardon is unlimited, heaven is limited to those who are sanctified by the belief of the pardon. The soul is diseased, and its diseases can be healed only by a knowledge of the holy love of God.

By thus limiting heaven and salvation to those who believe or know that they are pardoned, and who are sanctified by this knowledge; they admit a condition of salvation, as fully as the friends of evangelical religion: and, until they take refuge in the doctrine of universal salvation, and affirm that all, by birth, possess an undefeasible right to heaven, in spite of all their efforts to exclude a condition, it will firmly adhere to every theory which they can form.

They will tell us, indeed, that their condition is perfectly harmless; that it is destitute of merit; that it is no equivalent for any part of salvation; that it is only the turning point betwixt nature and grace; the commencement of salvation; and therefore that it cannot interfere with the perfect freeness of the gospel.

Now, we beg credit, when we assure them, that we ascribe no more worth or merit to faith, than they to knowledge or belief. We regard faith merely as the turning point betwixt nature and grace; as the beginning of religion; as the commencement of the Divine life; as the circumstance by which we receive the unspeakable gift of God, and are made partakers of the great salvation. The man who is without faith has neither part nor lot in the gospel. By faith the soul renounces all for Christ; cleaves to him simply; trusts in him entirely; and makes him its all. Faith is the gift of God, and wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost; and from its first act to its last exercise, tramples on self, grapples the soul to Jesus, and clings to him alone. And how can such a principle infringe on the absolute freeness of the gospel; any more than the use of our eyes can destroy the freeness of light, or the act of respiration, the freeness of the air? Pardon, according to our system, is no more than salvation is on theirs—a premium to faith. The blind and the lame, whom our Lord miraculously healed, were cured gratuitously,

though he previously inquired if they believed that he was able to grant them the blessing which they needed. We contend for justification by faith in order to shut out the idea of merit; and establish the invaluable truth for which Paul contended, when he declared, "It is of faith, that it might be by grace."

We have no love for the word, condition, and would gladly drop it, if we could only find a more unexceptionable term to express the necessity of a connection betwixt the soul and Christ, in order to enjoy his salvation. By admitting the necessity of such a connection; though they reject the offensive term, the Bereans still retain the thing. The great misfortune, however, is, that in their system the condition is thrown into a position, where it is calculated to produce mischief, tenfold greater than can be apprehended from the common hypothesis.

We boldly and openly tell our hearers, that, till they believe on Christ for their own salvation, instead of being redeemed and pardoned, they are the children of disobedience and wrath, in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. We leave this awful truth to work in their guilty consciences, till, by the blessing of the Holy Ghost, they are roused from their dreadful lethargy, and compelled to flee from the wrath to come. To a man who understands our language, it is no easy matter to succeed in preserving his fallacious and fatal peace. But to tell one and all, that Christ

has redeemed them; that their sins are forgiven; that the Saviour is theirs, and that the only thing a-wanting to their complete salvation, is merely to believe these things: this is to administer the strongest opiate that delusion can supply to lull secure and carnal consciences to rest. The only idea, in general, entertained of salvation is, that it is the pardon of sin, and the possession of an interest in Christ. Whenever the hardened transgressor hears that his sins are already pardoned, and that he is already interested in Christ, his fears and solicitude vanish. His ungodly confidence might be previously strong: but it now acquires unbounded strength. He has obtained all that he wants. He goes on his way rejoicing; and is prepared to work every abomination with as much avidity, and far greater coolness than before.

From the moment that a graceless man swallows this delusion, his case is desperate. He finds no difficulty in keeping his conscience quiet. The soporific he has taken, effectually composes all his alarm and uneasiness. Neither men nor angels are able to disturb his slumbers, nor rouse him from his mortal repose. All that he wished was the authority of Heaven to assure him that his sins were forgiven, and that he had a personal interest in Christ. And such is the information with which this system furnishes him. It says to him, that it has the authority of Heaven to declare, that God, for Christ's sake, loves every

man, that Christ has died for every human creature, and blotted out every sin. The system also certifies him, that to believe these things, and yet doubt if Christ has died for himself, and forgiven his own offences; is not only a gross and palpable contradiction, but is also in plain terms telling God that he is a liar.

He may be told that there is a difference betwixt pardon and justification, betwixt an interest in Christ and salvation. But he has no desire to trouble himself about metaphysical distinctions, and theological niceties. The great thing which he needs is the pardon of sin, and an interest in the redemption purchased by Christ. Higher authority than God's he cannot enjoy. And it is on this authority that he is assured that his sins are forgiven, and that he is redeemed by Christ. Having thus secured the grand object of his ambition, he is satisfied; and resolves to give himself no farther concern about the matter. He has been taught that, after acknowledging that Christ is the propitiation for sin, and the Saviour of the world, to doubt if Christ has expiated his own sins, and is his own Saviour, is to make God a liar. And this is a lesson which he is determined not to forget. The last vestige of religious feeling left, is the purpose firmly to believe in his own safety, lest the admission of a doubt should involve him in the unparelled guilt of making God a liar. In the vain hope of honouring the truth of God, the more dreadful his condition



becomes, he believes that it is the better; and clings most tenaciously to the hope of safety, when nearest irreparable perdition. In their benevolent attempt to conduct him by a short cut into christian peace and consolation, his spiritual guides land him in all the insensibility and obduracy of a reprobate mind; and confirm him in all his blindness and boldness, till peace and pardon are unattainable, and the horrors of unbroken darkness, and the distractions of everlasting despair, close around him.

Ah how dangerous, how ruinous, is it to heal the hurt of a wounded soul deceitfully! and how tremendous the responsibility of those, who, instead of the specific which the Scriptures prescribe for genuine peace and safety, substitute a narcotic which delivers up the patient to the death that never dies!

The good people, who told their wounded companions, that their cure did not depend upon their act of looking to the brazen serpent, but upon its power and efficacy; that their health and safety lay in it, and that no injury could befall them, if they would only believe that it had already made them perfectly whole; though they neither spoke all the truth, nor stated correctly the truth which they uttered, still they said much that was true.

And though there is much that is groundless, and much that is pernicious in the Berean hypoth-

esis; still it is interwoven with some rich, precious, and invaluable truths.

Christ is the only Mediator betwixt God and man. He is the propitiation for sin. Neither is there salvation in any other.

The powers of language cannot express the importance of bringing directly before the mind of the awakened sinner, the person and work of Immanuel, the freeness of his love, the riches of his grace, the virtue of his death, and the all-sufficiency of his righteousness. The first, genuine, and lasting comfort that can enter the mind of a sinner, who knows his need of salvation, must arise from a discovery of the perfection of his obedience, and the boundless value of his atonement. Under convictions of sin, many, if they have not been finally undone, have at least been long and needlessly detained in a state of distress and bondage, from their ignorance of the unsearchable grace, and superabundant merit of Jesus.

To those who are inquiring what they must do to be saved, the gospel is exactly and kindly adapted. It tells them that Christ is the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world: that he has come to seek and to save that which was lost: that we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. It is eighteen centuries since, on Calvary, he said, It is finished, bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. He then finished

transgression, made an end of sin, brought in everlasting righteousness, and for ever perfected them that are sanctified. Years can neither diminish its worth, nor the united efforts of the whole creation, through an endless existence, add to its amount. It is six thousand years since the earth was launched from the hand of its Creator, and the sun planted in the open firmament of heaven. Age can neither augment the firmness, nor shake the stability of the globe. Centuries can neither heighten nor impair the beauty and brilliancy of the solar orb. All that we have to do to enjoy the benefit of these mighty productions of Omnipotence, is to walk abroad upon the surface of our planet, and give free admission to the heat and lustre of the sun. The righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ was complete on the day on which he died. It was able then to have sustained the weight of ten thousand thousand worlds; and to have secured behind its impenetrable protection a rebellious universe from the artillery of incensed justice. And when the hand of the Eternal shall ring out the last knell of time, it will retain all the value and virtue which it possessed when his soul left his bleeding body, and the first penitent took shelter beneath his wounded side. Time cannot wear its worth away; nor any efforts of ours add to the plenitude of its power and merit. Our only business is to take it for our own, and apply it to all the vast and invaluable purposes for which it was provided.

This never can be done too soon, nor by a process possessed of too much simplicity and facility. The shipwrecked passengers and crew can never too speedily gain a place of safety; nor a patient too quickly be delivered from the pain of broken bones, and restored to his usual ease and soundness. And when the heavens above us are covered with blackness, and hell from beneath is yawning to receive us; can we be too promptly placed on board the ark of mercy, where we shall ride in safety amidst the fury of the tempest, and set its utmost rage at defiance? When we lie bleeding with the dreadful gashes which sin has made, and roaring because of the bones which it has broken, can we ever be freed with too much ease and expedition from pain and misery, and restored to health and safety?

But though we never can arrive at spiritual peace and safety too soon nor too simply; it is of unspeakably greater importance to reach them at all. If that man must die, who, amidst the ravages of a mortal malady, is utterly insensible of its presence and power; that man is in equal jeopardy, who, though alarmed at his situation, and who though he calls the physician, instead of taking the specific, throws the antidote away, and seizes on the vehicle by which it was conveyed. That soul is clearly in a state of perdition, which gives itself no concern about the way of peace and salvation: but is that soul any nearer the gates of heaven, which after hearing indistinctly of the

gospel method of salvation, instead of taking refuge there, sits down in some notion or scheme of its own? Though Jesus is rich in grace, and the blessings of redeeming mercy are innumerable and immense, within the whole great family of man, there is not one who will seriously lay these subjects to heart, till he is sensible of his guilt and depravity, and of his total inability to contribute to his own salvation. Men, in such a situation, will gladly welcome the gospel message: but all others will despise and reject it. The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Now, in the face of these facts, is it either innocent or safe to travel over the world preaching to every human creature, that Christ has redeemed him; that God, for Christ's sake, loves him, and has forgiven all his iniquities? Is it warrantable or kind to tell every sinner that, if he will only believe these things, all the blessings of the gospel are his own? Is there either truth or safety in such a representation?

Strangers to the system may be sceptical about the existence of such a representation. They may suppose that such language is merely the effect of ignorance, or an affected paradoxical use of words; and that all that is meant, by every man being redeemed, pardoned, and interested in Christ, is only that the righteousness of Christ is of infinite value; so that while the invitations of the gospel

are universal, and its offers free; God, for Christ's sake, in perfect consistency with all the attributes of his nature, can bestow pardon, acceptance, and eternal life upon every man who believes in Jesus.

But the Bereans scorn to have their representations ascribed to the abuse of words, or ignorance of the doctrines of revelation. They are perfectly aware of the import of the terms which they employ; and use them in their strict literal signification. This construction of these terms is absolutely necessary to establish the peculiarities of their hypothesis; which are, That all men, whether they believe or not, are redeemed and pardoned; and that to suspend the forgiveness of sin, and acceptance with God upon faith, is completely subversive of the gospel. The gospel could be no gospel at all; that is, it could not be the message of a free salvation, unless it assured every man that he was beloved of God, pardoned, and interested in Christ, not only before he believes, but even before he was born.

Grant them these postulates, and you may safely concede to them every part of their scheme. If these positions are true, there can be nothing behind to excite either surprise or fear.

But are these assertions true?

Let us examine the assertion, That God, for Christ's sake, loves every human creature.

Is this assertion true?

I know that God is love. He has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. He will have all

to come to repentance and live. He has so loved the world that he has given his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. And he has commanded repentance and remission of sins to be preached in the name of Christ among all nations. Every individual is earnestly invited to come to Christ; and none who has applied has been rejected, and none who will apply shall ever be rejected.

But because he has sent his Son to our guilty globe, does it follow that he has a love for all its inhabitants? and because he has provided a salvation sufficient for each, that he is determined to save the whole?

His power is irresistible, and his purposes unchangeable. An angel of light can have no greater security for his preservation and happiness than the love of God. Grant me this, and I can ask no more. Amidst my own weakness, and the greatest might and malignity of my foes, my safety in time, and my felicity through eternity, are infallible. Those whom he loves are partakers of everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. Come what will, all is well. Every thing is subservient to their benefit, and working together for their good. Each of these may say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be

no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

But is every man at liberty to adopt this language? Is every man in his natural state warranted to employ the words of the confirmed believer; and entitled, in the height of his profligacy and impiety, to use the declaration of the Apostle, in the midst of his labours and sufferings for the gospel, and when blessed with the manifestations of his Master's presence and approbation; and say, God loves me, and has given his Son for me? Are a Christian state and an ungodly condition such near neighbours? and the children of the devil so completely on a level with the sons of God?

For Christ's sake God does wonders of mercy and beneficence to every human creature. He gives to each life and breath and all things. He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. He fills the hearts of his enemies with good things; and loads even the worst of the wicked with his benefits. In the person of his Son he has provided a righteousness sufficient for the free, complete and everlasting salvation of the whole human race. He enjoins the tidings of this matchless display of mercy to be carried round the globe, and proclaimed in the ears of all the children of Adam. All are commanded to accept the provisions of his love; and the most unquali-

fied assurance of acceptance is held out to every soul, that betakes itself to the hope set before it in the gospel. Those who have departed farthest from God, run to the greatest excess of riot, and sunk lowest in vice and debauchery; have as ample and unlimited encouragement, as the more sober, decent, and self-denied, to come to Christ for life, and to look to him for salvation. There is no respect of persons with God. The same Lord, who is over all, is rich unto all. His own language is, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." On our application to Jesus, no act of rebellion is recalled to mind. The basest ingratitude and the vilest provocations are blotted out. His blood cleanseth from all sin.

But amidst this overwhelming exhibition of compassion and generosity, and this peerless profusion of his benefits and blessings, does it necessarily follow that God loves the whole human race, and has given his Son to die for each?

We know that God has created a hell as well as a heaven. We also know that multitudes of the human race are in the abodes of sorrow; and that crowds are fast following them down to the regions of everlasting darkness and woe. Wide

is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction; and many there be who go in thereat.

Now by nature all are alike. All are equally without God, and without hope: dead in trespasses and sins: the children of disobedience and wrath. There is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

If, therefore, God had an indiscriminate affection for the whole, it would be reasonable to expect that his conduct would be precisely the same to all: and since all are equally sunk in depravity and vice, all would either be consigned to everlasting misery, or raised to the enjoyment of eternal felicity and glory.

When, therefore, the state and character of the whole human race, by nature, is exactly alike; if God had the same affection for all, why is his conduct towards them so dissimilar? and their eternal condition so wonderfully different? Why is one taken, and another left? Why are some exalted to heaven, and others cast down to hell? Why does he say, Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated? Why does the Scripture say unto Pharaoh, "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth?" Why do we hear of the favour which he bears to his people? of some to whom it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, while to others the same

truths are spoken in parables? of the wise and prudent, from whom these things are hidden, and of the babes to whom they are revealed? Why are the ears of some circumcised to listen to the words of Christ, and others unable to hear *because* they are not of his sheep? Why are some hearts opened to receive the things that are spoken, and others unable to believe because God has hardened their hearts? Why is it given to some to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, while this gift is withheld from others? Why did Jesus declare, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me; for they are thine?" And instead of dying for all, why did he lay down his life only for his sheep?

Is this what might have been expected from the same indiscriminate regard for all? Does a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Will it fill a Sandemanian's vessel with brine, and a Berean's with nectar? Is it the same principle which raises some men to honour, which leaves others to descend to perdition? Will a ton depress a copper beam, but leave a silver balance in equilibrium?

For every effect there is a cause. When by nature the whole posterity of Adam are alike, there must be a cause for the prodigious contrast in their condition through eternity. Now to what are we to ascribe this mighty difference? Is it to be attributed to the choice of the believer? We must then ask, since the motives to religion infin-

itely preponderate over those to a life of carelessness and folly, why does every man in his sober senses not make a right and rational choice? Well then, is the conversion of believers to be assigned to God's love for the goodness which they possess in their graceless condition? In a graceless state no sinner possesses any good thing. They are all under sin. There is none that doeth good: no, not one. Will it be supposed then, that God loves them, and makes them the subjects of his saving grace, on account of their sinfulness? This supposition would bring us back to the point from which we started, and land us in the belief of an effect without any cause at all. For if the sinfulness of any man is the reason why he is an object of God's love, and made a partaker of the blessings of the gospel: then, since all are alike depraved by nature, the whole world should equally share in the wonders of redeeming mercy, and be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. He can do all things: neither is any thing too hard for him. He is as able to save one object of his affection as another: For who hath resisted his will? Since therefore all are not saved, it necessarily follows that all are not the objects of the same regard.

Notwithstanding every desire to discover evidence of God's indiscriminate love to all mankind, and to trace the salvation of men to the universal good will which he bears to the world; no proof of such an indiscriminate affection can be discern-

ed. After all we are obliged to return to the obnoxious, but precious truth : The salvation of men originates in the good pleasure of the God of love. Those who partake of grace on earth, and glory in heaven, are saved and called with a holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. 2 Tim. i. 9. We may form systems and theories as we please, but after all the fair and plausible schemes which we can devise, we shall leave the matter where we found it. “ It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that sheweth mercy. His counsel standeth for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations.”

If any know him in time, and enjoy him through eternity; it is because he has chosen them, and set them apart for himself. His affection for any soul, ensures all that is requisite for its present faith and final safety. It provides all that is necessary to bring that soul into union with Jesus now, and admit it into his kingdom hereafter. For unless this is the case, what meaning can we assign to the language, “ I have loved thee with an everlasting love, *therefore* with lovingkindness have I drawn thee?” What sense could we make of such declarations as these? “ We love him, because he first loved us?” “ To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood?” “ God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we

were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus?" "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word?" How could we adopt the triumphant challenge? "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or peril, or sword?—I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

According to the unvarying doctrine of Scripture, the love of God secures, as effectually as the decree of election, grace and glory to all its objects. But will any man venture to affirm, that God has chosen, elected, or ordained all men to eternal life? But unless we are prepared to make this assertion, we are not warranted to maintain that he loves all men in Christ, or for Christ's sake. It is enough for us to affirm that God has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world: That he commands all men every where to receive his Son: and assures every individual who believes on him, that he shall never perish. In making these statements, the Scriptures amply support us. But farther than this they have not gone:

and no good reason can be assigned for advancing farther than they have proceeded.

But, it has been asked, unless God has a special regard for every individual of our race, why are we told that he has so loved the world that he has given his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life? that the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost? and why are all men every where commanded to repent and believe the gospel?

Because a philanthropist sends to a parish a teacher, who is master of every science, and possessed of uncommon powers and patience in the communication of knowledge, to superintend the education of all the youth, whom God, by a special revelation, had enabled him to foresee, are able and willing to learn; are we from this unavoidably compelled to infer, that this liberal friend of the people has an indiscriminate regard for all the youth of the place? And because the Son of God, who is able to save to the uttermost, has come to a world where all are equally sunk in rebellion and ruin; does it necessarily follow that he feels the same affection for all, and came on purpose to save the whole? Because his power is almighty, is his affection indiscriminate; and does he entertain the same regard for the vessels of wrath who are fitting themselves for destruction, that he feels for the vessels of mercy

whom he himself is afore preparing for glory? If he has the same affection for all, when his power is omnipotent, why are any permitted to perish?

Since all were alike wretched and undone, in coming for the salvation of those whom he had chosen; he might justly be said to have come to seek and to save that which was lost. As they were the inhabitants of this planet; and he took not on him the nature of angels but of the seed of Abraham; his love was manifested not for fallen angels but for the world. And as the objects of his mission are of every age, rank, character, and description; scattered in every region of the globe; intermingled with every class of society; and when collected together shall form a multitude which none can number; they are described by general and comprehensive names. Amongst these names we find such as the following: sinners, many, them that are under the law, the lost.

But every individual, who admits that any perish, must acknowledge that the most comprehensive of these terms does not express an absolute universality. Notwithstanding this love of the world, and this mission to the lost; it is undeniable that many abide in darkness and in the shadow of death; and, therefore, that the objects of this love compose only a part of the species.

Men may try as they please to reject the doctrine of election. But if that precious truth must be called an encumbrance, it is one which will

adhere to every scheme that can be formed except that of universal salvation.

Secret things belong unto the Lord our God. In preaching the gospel our business is to proclaim the power and grace of Immanuel, and employ every effort to make men sensible of their sinfulness, and constrain them to betake themselves to him for salvation. It is impossible that we ever can be too successful. All are invited to come to him; and his irrevocable word is past, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

We know that God loves those who believe on his Son. But whatever invitations and promises are given to those who come to Christ: when we are told, that he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God; it is difficult to understand how an unbeliever, by abiding in the state on which the wrath of God rests, and by persisting in the practices which work out his own condemnation, can at the same time be an object of Divine kindness and love. To be an object at the same time of wrath and of love, seems as impossible as to be at once alive and dead.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN, OF A STATE OF GRACE,
AND AN INTEREST IN CHRIST

It is only for the righteousness of Christ that any sin can be forgiven. But because his righteousness is infinite, and was possessed of all its perfection when he died; it has been maintained that the sins of the whole world were pardoned when he expired, and that every human creature is born with an interest in the benefits of the Redeemer's death. It has also been asserted that there is such a repugnance betwixt the Divine nature and sin, that unless it is pardoned, it must be instantly punished. But as wicked men are spared long, this is a proof that sin is pardoned.

But though every Israelite had a right to look at the brazen serpent; and those who were bitten by the fiery flying serpents could obtain recovery from no other quarter: did it follow either that their infants were born invulnerable, or that the adults were cured before they were wounded? Even whether they looked at the brazen figure or not, was its virtue imparted along with the serpent's sting; otherwise would the wound have been instantly mortal, so that they could not have had

a moment's time to turn round to look at the infallible antidote?

I would like to know by what means any man has discovered that sin must either be pardoned, or instantly punished. Was the first sin committed in our world either instantly pardoned, or instantly punished? If sin is either instantly pardoned, or else instantly punished; how can God be said to have been forty years long grieved with a generation of the Israelites? to be made to serve with our sins, and wearied with our iniquities? How can he be said to be long-suffering and slow to wrath? to endure with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath? to be even weary with repenting? Psalm xcv. 10: Isa. xliii. 24: Exod. xxxiv. 6: Rom. ii. 4: ix. 24: 1 Pet. iii. 20: Jer. xv. 6.

If sin must either be pardoned, or instantly punished, wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea are mighty in power? Why does their pardon last through sixty-nine years, but expire the moment that they enter the precincts of seventy? How is this? Is sin more offensive and fatal in one year than in another? at fifty, than at twenty-five?

If sin must be either pardoned, or the sinner instantly cut off, how can the sins of parents be visited upon their children? and the descendents of the third, fourth, and even of a more remote generation, be punished for the crimes which were forgiven ages before they were born? Can a man at one time be both sick and in health? or the

same sin be both pardoned and punished? Exod. xx. 5: 2 Kings ix. 25, 26: Job xxi. 19: Psal. cix. 13—15: Amos i. 11: Mat. xxiii. 34—36.

If all sin were pardoned, we should not hear of the patience and forbearance of God, of his waiting to be gracious, and of his visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon their children. From the moment that he forgave their transgressions, his displeasure would cease, and he would rejoice over them to do them good.

I. With respect to the notion that all sin must have been pardoned when Christ died, because it is solely in consequence of his death that any iniquity is forgiven; it must be observed that if this idea were correct, many very surprising consequences must follow. Since it is entirely owing to his death that we enjoy any spiritual blessing or any eternal mercy, we must have been called and converted when he resigned his breath: since that day we must have been illuminated and sanctified; seated in heaven, and surrounded with all the purity and plenitude of its boundless blessedness.

This opinion confounds all distinction betwixt the cause and the effect, the decree and its execution. It is long since the hospital was built, and since the founder made provision for the maintenance of its various inmates. But though the settlement was fixed at once, and by a single deed; it is only as years revolve, that one claim-

ant after another can appear to reap the fruits of his munificence. And though it is only in consequence of the single sacrifice of Christ that any sin ever has been, or can be forgiven: have we any authority for affirming that pardon is bestowed before it is sought, and still less before the offence is committed, or the sinner brought into existence? Time can neither increase nor impair the value of the atonement: but time is requisite to raise up the successive generations who shall share in the blessings of the Redeemer's death.

In Scripture sin is represented as the only cause of the Divine displeasure. Ignorance, mistake, weakness, and pain may be all troublesome to society, and a source of vexation and distress to the sufferer; but while free from sin, they are no ground of offence to God. But sin is the abominable thing which he hates; and wherever it exists, is the cause of his strong and unchanging abhorrence. It is against this that his wrath is revealed from heaven, and comes upon any of the souls of men. When sin is forgiven his anger is turned away. He is pacified towards us. He comforts us, and rejoices over us to do us good.

If, therefore, all sin had been pardoned when Jesus died; since that day the world would have been cleared of the visitations of judgment: sorrow and suffering would have been unknown, and the earth converted into an abode of peace and joy. But in the face of the crimes and calamities which every where darken and desolate the globe; how

can we affirm that all sin has been forgiven? When asured that by nature all "are the children of wrath;" that "he that believeth not is condemned already;" that the wrath of God shall not seize on him or overtake him, but to intimate that it was on him before he was guilty of unbelief, we are told that "the wrath of God abideth on him:" in the teeth of these awful assurances, how can we assert that all sin is remitted? Does the effect operate after the cause has ceased? Does frost retain its grasp amidst the heat of summer; or congelation go on in the heart of a burning furnace?

Whenever sin is forgiven, the Scriptures inform us that it is blotted out, forgotten, and cast into the depths of the sea. The accounts of the ancients were sometimes inscribed on waxen tablets. When the debt was discharged, the surface of the tablet was melted, and the writing thus for ever effaced. To this practice some suppose allusion is made where sin is said to be "covered." But at any rate sin shall no more rise up against those who have received pardon from the Eternal, than the hand-writing can be revived on the surface of the melted wax. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. i. 18. See also Jer. xxxi. 34, xxxiii. 8. Micah vii. 18, 19. Heb. x. 16—18. The east and the west will sooner meet, than the par-

doned sinner come in contact with his sins. Psal. ciii. 3, 12. At death they cannot daunt him. 1 Cor. xv. 55—57. And even in that dread day, when the countless millions from all quarters of the earth shall surround the throne of justice, and the Omniscient shall lay judgment to the line and equity to the plummet; even then when he will bring every work into judgment, “in those days, and at that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none: and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: *for I will pardon whom I reserve.*” Jer. l. 20. See also Isa. xlv. 22.

Whenever sin is pardoned, the love and favour of God are immediately bestowed. “Thy sins are forgiven thee,” from the lips of our incarnate Redeemer, not only banished disease and pain, but recalled health and strength, and assured the happy individual of peace with God and a right to heaven. In the eighty-fifth psalm, the prosperity of the people, and the restoration of their captivity are attributed to the forgiveness of their sins. In the thirty-second Psalm, David speaks of the blessedness of those who are possessed of pardon: and he adds no more. But was nothing more included in his language? Listen to the words of Paul. In his inspired commentary on this interesting text, he says: “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God *imputeth righteousness without works*, saying; Blessed are they whose iniquities are for-

given, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Rom. iv. 6—8. Why shall the inhabitant not say I am sick? "Because the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Isa. xxxiii. 24.

Whenever sin is forgiven salvation inevitably follows. Hence, though there is a wide difference betwixt pardon, justification, and salvation; yet, from the inseparable connection betwixt them, and the fact that one of them is never enjoyed without the rest, one of these is often employed for the other. Thus we find, in the following passages, that the forgiveness of sins is used as equivalent with salvation, or redemption through the blood of Christ. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Acts v. 31, xiii. 38. Col. i. 14.

Besides, in reading such language as the above, it is natural to inquire, Why was Christ "exalted to give forgiveness of sins," if this blessing was bestowed before he left the earth?

If every sin, except unbelief, is forgiven; then, it must be wrong to preach the gospel to Heathens and Mahometans. Even supposing that all of them should believe it, the gospel can do no more than save them: and since they are already par-

doned, they are already sure of heaven. But, if upon hearing the gospel, any of them shall reject it, they must incur the guilt and consequences of unbelief. According to this hypothesis, the gospel, instead of being the power of God unto salvation, is the ministration of condemnation and wrath ; and if we are to consult either the honour of God or the good of man ; instead of preaching it to every creature, we should be compelled to conceal and suppress it.

But unless unbelief was likewise pardoned, all sin cannot be forgiven : for nothing can be more obvious than that, while a single offence remains uncanceled, all sin has not been blotted out. If, therefore, unbelief, in common with every other sin has been remitted ; every human creature is free from guilt and perfectly safe. None of all the children of Adam, can, consistently with justice, be subjected to punishment. The criminal who obtains his sovereign's pardon is entitled to his life. It would be at the peril of any man to injure him : and were the officers of justice to put him to death, they would be guilty of murder. And if, at the death of Christ, all the sins of the whole human race were forgiven, there is not an inhabitant of the earth, who could, in equity, be subjected to everlasting misery. To punish those who have received the free forgiveness of the Eternal King, is a gross outrage upon justice, and the most monstrous idea that can enter the mind. The votaries, however, of this scheme,

have not yet avowed the doctrine of universal salvation. They maintain the everlasting punishment of some. And by believing in the perdition of some; at the very time that they are endeavouring to exalt the value of the atonement, and magnify the freeness of the gospel, they actually destroy the Divine justice; and give a more revolting view, than ever was proposed to the world, of the perfect and adorable character of the Father of mercies and the God of love. According to this hypothesis, pardon is no security from punishment. For many of those who are pardoned are in the depths of hell.

If one sin is not remitted, it is evident that the whole of our transgressions are not pardoned: and if one of the human race goes to perdition, that fact demonstrates that all men have not obtained the forgiveness of sin by the death of Christ.

Many most painful facts concur to prove that neither all men, nor all their sins are forgiven.

Jesus saves his people from their sins. Whenever their offences are blotted out, they depart from iniquity. They love much. They live to God. They sin no more. For he that committeth sin is the servant of sin. He is still in his sins, and exposed to all their dreadful consequences. The prevalence, therefore, of unrighteousness, uniformly shews the amount of iniquity that is not pardoned.

Though it is solely on account of the propitiation of Immanuel, that any transgression is blot-

ted out; the language of revelation never represents sin as forgiven either before it is committed, or before it is repented of and renounced.

What is removed may return: but it cannot at one and the same time be both absent and present. If sin were pardoned or removed before it was committed, and even before we were born, it might be revived, recalled, or brought back, but remain it could not. Yet "Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see, therefore your sin *remaineth*."

If pardon preceded transgression, we might be exhorted to forsake our evil practices, and return to our duty; but we should no more be admonished to ask forgiveness, than be enjoined to set the tide a-flowing, or to put the planets in motion. But instead of possessing a full and immutable pardon, the uniform doctrine of the Scriptures is, that without repentance our perdition is inevitable. "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye *repent*, ye shall likewise perish." The whole of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple proceeds upon the fact, that no remission is bestowed before repentance. 1 Kings viii. 30—50. "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin." Ezek. xviii. 30. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

Prov. xxviii. 13. The design of the gospel is declared to be, "To turn men from the power of Satan unto God, that they *may* receive forgiveness of sins." Acts xxvi. 18. The Apostles exhorted their hearers "to repent, and be converted, *that* their sins might be blotted out." Acts ii. 38: iii. 19. To Simon Magus they said, "Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee." But if this thought was already pardoned, instead of admonishing him to give thanks for its remission, why did they enjoin him to pray for its forgiveness? The awful fact, however, seems to be, that this thought never was forgiven, neither before nor after this address. "Let the wicked *forsake* his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he *will* abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 7: Psalm xxxii. 5: Jer. xxxi. 18—20.

Now, if all sin was blotted out at once, why these exhortations to repentance in order that it may be forgiven?

To get rid of the argument drawn from Acts ii. 38, iii. 19, and similar passages; we are told that they merely signify to be converted to the true view of God's character which blots out sin, and be baptized into the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake. But are those who advance such an assertion, also ready to admit

that we are exhorted to give diligence to make our calling and election sure; because if we do so, we shew that we have never fallen, but have always enjoyed an abundant portion of the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour? and that Noah prepared the ark, as a memorial of the previous preservation of his house from the deluge? 2 Pet. i. 10, 11: Heb. xi. 7 Are we to reverse the usual meaning of language? to consider exhortations as promises? and regard future events as past transactions?

If all sin were pardoned before we had a being, its presence could not deprive us of any blessing, nor its removal bring us any benefit. But the Bible assures us, that sin hides from us the face of God, prevents our prayers from being heard, and exposes us to the severest temporal and spiritual judgments; and the same Bible informs us, that real repentance is the means of freeing us from the calamities which sin has inflicted, and of securing the blessings which it has forfeited. Isa. lix. 1, 2. Jer. v. 25. Prov. xiv. 34. James v. 15. Hosea xiv. 1—4.

If all our sins were forgiven before we were born, there could be no necessity for praying for their remission. The Scriptures, however, abound with petitions for the pardon of sin: and our blessed Lord, in the same form of prayer, in which he taught us to say, “Our Father, who art in heaven,” instructed us also to say, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” Instead

of adding that, whether we forgive men or not, our own offences are at any rate forgiven; he declared, “If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father *will* also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, *neither will* your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.” Psalm xxv. 11, 18: li. Mat. vi. 12, 14, 15: xviii. 35. James ii. 13.

Now, are these things so? Is it true that sin is the only cause of the Divine displeasure? that, when sin is renounced, God withdraws his anger and restores his favour? that when sin is forgiven, it is blotted out and never permitted to rise up against us? that those who are pardoned are blessed with the imputation of righteousness, and put in possession of salvation? Is all this true? Then, either every human creature must infallibly reach the kingdom of heaven, or else all sin is not forgiven. For if the possession of an interest in the righteousness of Christ and the salvation which he wrought out will not place the soul in the enjoyment of glory; the object of redeeming love is defeated, the foundations of hope are destroyed, and the God of grace has not yet given man any thing by which we may secure eternal life, or obtain solid peace and lasting comfort to our souls.

Is it also true, that where sin is pardoned, it is removed? that it cannot injure us? and that there is no occasion either to repent of it that it may be forgiven, or to pray for its remission? Is all this

likewise true? And yet does the Bible inculcate repentance and prayer for the remission of sin? and tell us, that, where it is indulged, it remains and brings calamities upon both the soul and body? Then the system that asserts the pardon of all sin, whether men believe or not, is completely opposed to the doctrines of revelation; and, if the one come from heaven, the other has no origin there.

The scheme that enforces such a tenet, is pregnant with inexpressible mischief. It destroys the obligations of the law, and supersedes the grace of the gospel. A votary of this system may logically argue, If the guilt of my transgressions was taken away before I was born, sin I cannot. No action that I can commit is possessed of the slightest criminality. I may walk in the sight of my eyes, and in the ways of my heart, without the slightest danger of punishment from either God or man. And since I am without sin, what use have I for the gospel, or need of a Saviour? the guilt of all my transgressions was removed before I had a being. I have no occasion for its provisions, nor any necessity for a personal application to the Son of God. He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. But sinner I am not: and, therefore, require neither repentance nor pardon.

In this manner Christ is made the minister of sin: and the natural tendency of the system is to encourage men to continue in sin that grace may

abound; and, in order to do the greater honour to the Redeemer, to build up the works of the devil, which Jesus came to destroy.

II. Let us now attend to their doctrine respecting all being in a state of grace, and possessed of an interest in Christ.

If they affix a new meaning to these old expressions; and by a state of grace, and an interest in Christ, understand something different, or altogether opposite to union with Christ and a personal possession of the immense and unsearchable blessings of salvation: perhaps when they explain themselves, we may be able to admit that graceless men are in a state of grace, and the enemies of the Redeemer interested in him. If by a state of grace and an interest in Christ they intend no more, than that we are under neither the patriarchal nor Mosaical Economy, but under the dispensation of the gospel; that we enjoy the means of grace, and are warranted, encouraged, and commanded to go to the Saviour, believe on him and trust in him; though we must regret the novel application of the old phraseology, we could have no inclination to controvert the truth which it asserts. For with the Scriptures in our hands; where the God of grace enjoins us to carry the gospel round the globe, and proclaim its glorious tidings to every creature; where he commands all men to believe on the name of his Son, and assures every one that believeth, that he shall never

perish nor come into condemnation: who dare arrest the generous current of saving mercy, exclude any soul from the Almighty Redeemer, impede him in his flight to Calvary or intercept him in the act of bathing his guilty conscience in the crimson currents of the cross? With the Scriptures in our hands, we will cordially unite with any man in contending for the universal extent of the gospel call, the all-sufficiency of the Saviour, the absolute freeness of his salvation, and the privilege and duty of every man to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. If any man refuse to believe on Jesus, he is guilty at once of an outrage against the authority of the Most High, and of a mortal offence against his own soul. He at once rejects the best gift of Heaven, and irrevocably seals his own eternal doom.

But if the usual acceptation of these momentous phrases is retained; and by a state of grace, and an interest in Christ, we are to understand deliverance from the guilt and power of sin, reconciliation to God, union to Christ, the possession of his righteousness and image, and the presence, teaching, and strengthening influences of the Holy Ghost; we must loudly declare that a more rash, baseless, and visionary proposition never was published.

That all the high honours and invaluable blessings which have just now been stated, are included in being in a state of grace, and interested in Christ; who can doubt who looks at the language

of revelation? What other inference can we draw from such declarations as those that follow? "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law but under grace. There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ hath made me free from the law of sin and death. If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He that hath the Son hath life. All are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours, and ye are Christ's." Rom. vi. 14: vii. 4—6: viii. 1, 2, 9, 10. Gal. iii. 23—26: v. 24. 1 John iv. 13: v. 12. 1 Cor. i. 30: iii. 21—23.

Now are we at liberty to say, that such privileges as these are the common inheritance of our race? Where is our warrant to make the tour of our planet, and proclaim to all as we pass, Ye are Christ's and he is yours? Where is our authority for saying to the profane and dissipated, the proud and haughty, the cruel and oppressive, the brutish sot and blood-stained ruffian, to those who are

the filth of the world and the offscourings of all things; What! know ye not that sin has no dominion over you? that ye are not under the law but under grace? that you are in Christ, and that he is in you? that your life is hid with Christ in God? that you are led by the Spirit, and are the sons of God? and if children, then, heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ?

Unless we are able to believe the most gross and palpable contradictions; we cannot believe that natural men are in a state of grace, and interested in Christ.

Nothing can be more opposite than love and wrath, liberty and bondage, acquittal and condemnation, grace and law, the power of Satan and the dominion of God. But every unbeliever, every unregenerate man, or every man by nature; under whatever dispensation he is born, whether under the law or the gospel, is in a state of wrath. Till the Son make him free, no man is free. We are born of the flesh; and flesh we remain, till born of the Spirit. The carnal or natural mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be: so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. To them nothing is pure: but even their mind and conscience is defiled: and their prayer is an abomination to the Lord. They are of the works of the law, and under a curse. They are the children of disobedience; the servants of sin; they are of the devil; the slaves of Satan; and led captive by him

at his pleasure. Eph. ii. 2, 3. John viii. 34, 36. iii. 6. Rom. viii. 6—8. Tit. i. 15. Prov. xxviii. 9. xv. 8. Gal. iii. 10.

Such is the scriptural account of the natural state of man. And is this compatible with a state of grace? Can a man at the same time be a child of God and of the devil? under the bondage of sin and the freedom of grace? the curse of the law, and the blessing of the gospel? an object of wrath and of love? To advance such an assertion, is as absurd as to affirm that a man may at the same time be in heaven and in hell.

This system breaks down the broadest and most awful distinctions known in the government of God. It reverses the whole process of revelation; and introduces endless confusion and unmanageable disorder into religion. It begins where the Bible ends: addresses the enemies of God in the language which He reserves for his friends; gives the children's meat to dogs, casts its pearls before swine: and renders it doubtful if the least security shall be left to the children for enjoying their crumbs.

If this hypothesis had been founded in truth, the Bible would never have uttered a word respecting the bondage and danger to which we succeed by birth. Instead of exhorting us to leave the condition in which we are born, it would have earnestly guarded us against any change in our situation. Instead of speaking of obstructions in the way of life, it would have ex-

patiated on the breadth and smoothness of the path, and the certain success of all who shall seek to enter it. On this scheme what can the Bible mean by so often declaring that we must be born again? that strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life; and those must strive who enter thereat? that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force? that many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able? What can it mean by assuring us, that some are ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth? that the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, who followed after righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness?

Is it possible that such language as this could have been applied to any human creature, if every man had been born in a state of grace, and possessed of an interest in the righteousness of Christ? In such a case, could any have failed to find what he actually enjoyed; and been unable to reach what he held in his hands?

With God there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He rests in his love. He hates those who put away; and gives them no example of inconstancy and fickleness. He is ever in one mind, and none can turn him. Till he break down the earthly house of our tabernacle, and admit our soul into the world of glory, he has no greater blessing to bestow than to place us in

a state of grace, and grant us an interest in the righteousness of Christ. This allies us to himself: makes us heirs of all things; and secures salvation with eternal glory. It is a good part which shall never be taken away. It is a privilege which shall never be suspended nor withdrawn. The mountains may depart, and the hills may be removed: but his kindness shall not depart from his people, nor the covenant of his peace be removed. "To my sheep I give eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

From the infallible salvation of all who are in Christ; it inevitably follows, either that none shall perish, or else that all have not an interest in him. But multitudes have already gone down to destruction; and many seem to be fast following them to the same place of woe. We are, therefore, irresistibly obliged to conclude, that the assertion in question is groundless; and that none have an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, but those who are called by his grace, and united to him by his Spirit.

Under the idea of magnifying the generosity of God, by extending redemption to the whole human race, and including all men in Christ's commission; this system depreciates the worth of every spiritual blessing, and sweeps away every foundation on which a believer can place a solid hope of everlasting life. If neither the love of

God, nor the forgiveness of sin, nor the being under grace, nor the possession of an interest in Christ; can give security for eternal blessedness, where can such security be found? And if a fire would be useless without heat, and a cure without recovery: pray what better is that love which leaves its objects in a state of wrath; that pardon which delivers up its possessor to punishment; and that grace, and that interest in Christ, which allow those who receive them to sink into perdition?

Are this state of grace, and this interest in Christ, a gift of God, or not? If they are not: it is not worth while to spend five words in inquiring either whence they come, or whither they go. But if they are the gift of God: then, when once bestowed, they are irrevocable: for his gifts and callings are without repentance.

What can have induced any to have adopted a hypothesis so utterly and obviously unfounded; and to labour with such diligence and zeal to impose it upon the religious public?

We have been told that, unless all have an interest in Christ; it cannot be the duty of every man to believe on him, nor can the unbelieving be justly condemned for rejecting him.

In reply, it may be observed, that, according to this notion, it could not be the duty of any to seek the way to heaven, unless they had been formerly there: nor could a criminal be condemned for theft and villany, unless he had been originally

just and honest. The man's own interest, however, and the Divine command ought to be enough to lead him to seek the kingdom of heaven, even though he never has been there. The authority of God, enjoining all to cultivate rectitude, binds every man to be upright, whatever he may have previously been. And whether by birth we possess an interest in Christ or not; the command of God requiring every man to believe in an all-sufficient Redeemer, and his absolute promise of acceptance to all who embrace the righteousness of Christ; are enough to render it the duty of every human creature to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and to leave him utterly inexcusable for either rejecting or neglecting the great salvation.

Say, if Christ had not come into the world, would we have been under condemnation, and exposed to everlasting misery? If any man say No: then he virtually, or broadly declares that Jesus came to the world on an idle errand; and that every part of the Bible is false, which teaches us that by nature we were lost, and under condemnation and wrath. John iii. 36. Luke xix. 10. 1 Thess. i. 10. But if any man say, Yes: we should have been all eternally and justly undone, if Christ had not come and redeemed us from the curse of the law: then I ask, Can our unbelief, our rejection of the grace of the gospel, efface the criminality of our transgressions of the law? and though the single guilt of violating the

law would justly have ruined us; shall the double guilt of sinning against both the law and the gospel be insufficient to condemn us?

Enough has been said to shew that, if we are to retain the ordinary use of the terms, all men are neither interested in Christ, nor placed in a state of grace.

But perhaps by “a state of grace and an interest in Christ,” no more is intended than what Arminians understand by the universal salvability of men: that the gospel has superseded the covenant of works, and placed man in a new covenant relation to God, where none can perish except those who fall from this new relation: that Christ has broken down every barrier betwixt God and man, thrown open the gates of glory, made all welcome to enter who please, purchased grace for the whole; and, though he has secured salvation to none, has rendered it possible for all.

If this is what is to be understood by all being placed in a state of grace and interested in Christ: then the hypothesis deserves a few remarks on the view which it gives both of God and of man.

1. If it is intended to assert that, in consequence of what Christ has done, God may save as many as he pleases: we may observe that justice must require the salvation either of all, or only a part of our race. If, notwithstanding the work of Christ, his justice will allow God to save only some: then it is clear that the tenet of universal salvability does

not extend salvation farther than the doctrine of particular redemption; and that, notwithstanding the universal design of Christ's death, no more are actually brought to heaven, than if he had intentionally died only for some.

But if every barrier is broken down, and justice requires all to be saved; why are any permitted to perish? If from love to the whole world God gave up his Son to death for all: after giving the greater, is it consistent with his love to withhold the smaller and inferior gift? Is there mutability and inconstancy with God; so that after surrendering his Son purposely for all, he keeps back the fruits of his sufferings and sorrows from multitudes? Is this such an inference as we are taught to draw from the declarations: "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. v. 10. viii. 32.

On this hypothesis it is as impossible to reconcile the perdition of any with the justice, as with the love of God. For Christ by his death must be acknowledged either to have merited salvation for all in whose behalf he died, or not. If he did not: then why, throughout the whole sacred volume is the redemption of all who are saved invariably ascribed to his death? Isa. liii. 4—12.

Mat. xx. 28. John x. 11, 15, 17. Rom. viii. 34. Gal. iii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 18—21. Rev. v. 8.

But if Christ merited salvation for all for whom he died ; then, if he died for all, he is entitled to the salvation of all, and cannot in justice be deprived of the salvation of any.

2. Let us view this hypothesis as it regards the condition of man.

It is affirmed that Christ has abolished the covenant of works, and placed all men in a new covenant relation to God. But if Christ has placed all men under the covenant of grace ; how could the Apostle say that “ as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse ? ” that “ before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed ? ” Gal. iii. 10, 23. And why does he spend time in proving, that every man is under the law till by faith he receive the Lord Jesus Christ ? Rom. vii. 1—6.

But granting, for argument's sake, that such a new covenant existed : pray, what are the benefits which it is supposed that it entails ? These must either amount to the salvation of the soul, or to something less. If this new covenant relation ensures eternal salvation : then, 1. Since few possess either faith or regeneration, in direct opposition to our Lord's declarations, Mark xvi. 16, John iii. 3, we may be saved, without either faith or regeneration. 2. Since all by birth are in this new

covenant relation, all except apostates must remain in Christ, and none can come to him but those who have in their own persons apostatized, or fallen from him. 3. This hypothesis implies that all who now perish fall from the covenant of grace. But the Scriptures assure us that all who are in that covenant shall never fall away. Jer. xxxii. 40. 4. What is still more extraordinary, if it entails salvation: then, none of all the human race can perish. The salvation of the whole must be certain and infallible. This, however, is clearly contrary to fact. Mat. vii. 13, 14.

But if this covenant is unable to ensure salvation: pray what does it accomplish? Does it impart faith to receive the Lord Jesus Christ? No: otherwise all men would be saved. Mark xvi. 16. Does it include the grace of election? No indeed: for "many are called, but few are chosen." Does it convey the grace of effectual calling? No: for whom God calls them he also justifies. Does it bring the grace of sanctification? No: for multitudes are abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. Does it bestow justification? Why? who will say that all are justified freely, and accepted in the Beloved? Were this the case the perdition of any would be impossible. Whom God justifies, them he also glorifies. Rom. v. 9, 10, viii. 30.

When we are told that every barrier is cast down, and the gates of heaven thrown open to all: I would like to know if all have the power to en-

ter. If it is affirmed that all have the power to enter: then I ask, how can such an assertion be reconciled with the scriptural doctrine, that by nature we are dead in trespasses and sins, and that no man can come to Christ except the Father draw him?

But if it is admitted that graceless men have not the power,* to enter: what advantage is gained by breaking down the barriers betwixt man and God, and throwing open the gates of glory? By opening their graves, will you raise the dead? By throwing down the walls of Jericho, could an army without limbs have walked in? And supposing that Christ had not only thrown open the gates of heaven, but even laid its walls prostrate: unless he also give life to those who are spiritually dead, and limbs to those who are spiritually lame; is there one in all the great family of man who can climb the celestial hill, and sit down on the mount of God?

This notion of universal pardon and grace is utterly unfounded, and subversive of the whole plan of salvation. It deprives the Redeemer of the travail of his soul, by leaving those for whom he died far short of heaven. It destroys the believer's foundation for hope and comfort, by pla-

* Moral inability consists in the strength of wickedness. The natural powers of Satan are the same as when he was in heaven: but his superlative wickedness renders him morally the weakest of creatures.

cing his salvation on a condition which he never can perform. It represents God as possessing that strong and tender love to the whole human race, that he would freely and gladly give them all things, except the only thing which will do them any essential service. "See your aim, even to exalt yourselves, and your free will in the room of grace, or at least leaving it room to come in, to have the best share in the work of salvation, viz. believing itself, which makes all the rest profitable. See now, what your universality of free grace leads and tends to: are not the very terms opposite to one another? To bring in reprobates to be objects of free grace, you deny the free grace of God to the elect: and to make it universal, you deny it to be effectual. That all may have a share of it, they deny any to be saved by it."*

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE NATURAL STATE OF MAN, SCRIPTURAL PREACHING,
AND PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS.

I. Do the representations of this system correspond with the scriptural account of the relation in which natural men stand to God?

If in the act of being elevated the brazen serpent had either extracted the poison from the

* Owen's Works, vol. v. p. 540.

stings of the living serpents, or fortified the bodies of all the Hebrews against the slightest injury from the future attacks of these reptiles; we should have heard no more of any of their wounds, and the whole congregation would have been addressed as completely free from pain and danger.

And if Christ has really redeemed all men by his death, blotted out all their iniquities, given all an interest in his salvation, and restored them to the friendship of God; we surely might expect to hear men in their natural state described as the objects of Divine love. Their natural condition would not be denounced as one of guilt and danger, nor they themselves as exposed to the displeasure of the Most High. But is this the case?

The Bible contains a sublime, delightful, and endearing account of the character of God. It tells us that he is the Father of mercies, and the God of love; that he is merciful, and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. It tells us that, though the world lies in wickedness, and every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is only evil continually; he has so loved this vile, worthless, and rebellious world, that he has given his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.

But amidst this matchless grace and boundless compassion of the Most High; does the Bible ever speak of men by nature as near to God, as redeemed by the blood of his Son, and the objects

of his affection? Does it represent them as born in his house, the members of his family, and the heirs of his kingdom?

Is this such an inference as we are compelled to draw from the declarations, That which is born of the flesh is flesh? The carnal mind is enmity against God? So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God? That by nature we are the children of disobedience and wrath?

Instead of representing natural men as near to God, as redeemed by his Son, and beloved for his sake; the Bible speaks of them as far from God, as without God, and without hope. God is there represented as entreating them to come to him, to return to him, to seek him that they may find him. They are exhorted to kiss the Son, lest he be angry; to incline their ear, and come unto him; to hear, and their souls shall live. Christ stands at the door, and knocks for admission. He complains that they will not submit to his righteousness; nor come to him that they might have life.

Now, is this such language as we might have expected respecting men, who are in alliance with God, whose iniquities are covered, and who are redeemed by the blood of Christ? Those who are born on shore, may be obliged to travel to reach their transport. But whatever exercise they may take for their health and amusement, those who are born on ship-board, and never have for a moment left it, can have no occasion to undertake a journey to reach their vessel. And though

those who by nature are without God and without Christ, who have no relation to the Redeemer nor interest in his righteousness; may be guilty of being far from God, of rejecting the righteousness of Christ, and refusing him admission into their hearts: how can this be the case with those who are already brought nigh to God by the blood of his Son, who are in Christ, and possessed of his righteousness?

To this it has been said, that, though all men have been redeemed by Christ and are born in a state of grace, yet this does them no service as long as they disbelieve that this is the case; or, in other words, since in this scheme faith and knowledge are the same, are ignorant of their invaluable privilege.

In reply we must remind them of the dishonourable idea which this notion gives us of the character of God. The worldly and covetous have often turned the poor aside from their rights, and seized on the fortune of the orphan and the fatherless. They have seldom, however, had the baseness to put the victims of their fraud and villany to death. But if all men have been redeemed, pardoned, placed in a state of grace, and entitled to the heavenly inheritance: are we for one moment to suppose that the God of love will take advantage of their want of knowledge, to deprive them of their rights; and, instead of acting as their guardian, and sacredly preserving this blood-bought property till they know that it is their own,

and are capable of enjoying and using it, will convert their ignorance into a cause, not only of debarring them from entering on it at all, but of consigning them to bitter and endless misery? Is this such conduct as we might expect from the Father of mercies, who prevents us with the blessings of goodness? who is found of them that seek him not? and who exceeds our utmost thoughts and requests? Is this what we might expect from him whose mercies are over all his works? who is the Father of the fatherless, and the help of the oppressed? Instead of being the avenger of the fraudulent and injurious, shall we say or insinuate that the Judge of all the earth is their pattern and protector?

II. Does this scheme coincide with the specimens of preaching left on record in the word of God?

If at the moment of its elevation the brazen serpent had annihilated the poison of the living reptiles, and ensured health and safety to all the camp; proclamations might have been issued, enjoining the people to praise their Deliverer, and rejoice in their felicity; but most assuredly nothing would have been said of their pain and danger, nor of the necessity of their looking to the figure on the pole for a cure.

And if we were all redeemed, pardoned, and placed in a state of grace by the Redeemer's death; it might be expected that we should have

been required to bless the Lord for our salvation, and to triumph in our honour and security; but we certainly should never have heard the Bible addressing us as if by nature we were under guilt and exposed to danger.

The preachers of the system under review, commence their labours by telling their hearers promiscuously, that God loves them, has redeemed them, forgiven their iniquities, freed them from the law, and placed them in a state of grace. And they wish and expect that the publication of their scheme will produce immediate and universal delight and joy; and lead all their hearers to admire the love of God, and exult in their own absolute safety and boundless blessedness.

Now does this practice at all coincide with the specimens of preaching left on record in the sacred volume?

With such specimens the Scriptures abound. We have many examples of the discourses of the prophets. But when these holy men were sent with messages from the Most High to the backsliding Jews, or idolatrous Gentiles; were they ordered to open their commission, by telling them of the exalted dignity to which they were raised, and the invaluable privileges which they possessed? No indeed. They were commanded to lift up their voice like a trumpet; to shew the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins. They were to reprove them for their offences, and set their sins in order before them. They

were to call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, and judge the people. Oaks are not laid prostrate by the scratchings of a penknife; nor rocks blown up by the blast of a bellows. The sleepy consciences of the carnal are not roused from their lethargy by the lulling sounds of adulation, nor the graceless constrained to flee from the wrath to come by words of peace and gentleness. The messengers of Heaven accordingly addressed their hearers in a different tone. Though they poured out the most melting strains of tenderness, to soothe and cheer the humble and the contrite: they never ceased to proclaim woe against them who were at ease in Zion, and to direct the most tremendous threatenings against the impenitent and hardened. None more effectually obstructed their success, nor incurred more dreadful denunciations of judgment than the false prophets, who spoke smooth things, and prophesied deceit. And if the prophets of the Lord could have had the baseness to have adopted their language, and walked in their steps, instead of being subjected to trials of cruel mockings, of scourgings, bonds, and death, they would have been caressed and honoured.

Nathan harrowed up the conscience of the royal transgressor, by exposing the enormity of his crime, before he informed him that the Lord had put away his sin. When the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, he did not entertain the people with an account of their privileges, nor

tell them that God loved each of them. He preached the doctrine of repentance; and exhorted them to prepare for the coming of the Lord by confessing and renouncing their sins. In reading the history of the Apostles, in vain shall we search for a single instance, in which they began their message among a people, by announcing that they were all the objects of God's saving favour, and redeemed and pardoned for the sake of Christ. Their invariable practice was to make known the guilt and danger of their hearers; to unfold the excellency, and expound the obligation of the law; and then to proclaim the grace and all-sufficiency of the gospel. They first charged sin home upon the conscience of their auditory: and then, when conviction seized on their hearts, and their souls were softened and subdued by a discovery of guilt and ruin, they applied the balm of the covenant, and announced the consolation which christianity contains for them who mourn in Zion. On the day of Pentecost; Peter and the eleven did not commence their address with a discourse upon the love of God to all mankind, and the complete remission of the sins of all who surrounded them. They directly accused their hearers of having taken, and with wicked hands crucified and slain the Lord of glory. Paul did not reason with Felix of the forgiveness of his sins, and of his being delivered from the law, and introduced into a state of grace. He reasoned with him of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.

The first effect of their sermons was, not to send their audience away rejoicing, but to pierce their hearts, cover them with shame, fill them with consternation and trembling; and, instead of leading them instantly to exult in their own safety and happiness, to cry, Men and brethren, what must we do?

Whether the epistle to the Romans is regarded as a letter, a sermon, or a treatise on christian doctrine; it is invaluable as a specimen of the manner in which the Apostles handled the word of God, and of the order and connection in which they stated the truths of the gospel. Now, does this inestimable document commence by affirming the love of God through Christ to all the children of Adam, and the forgiveness of every sin whether men believe or disbelieve? No indeed. Chapter after chapter is employed in proving the total depravity of our species, in demonstrating the deplorable guilt, and in illustrating the undescribable danger of the whole race; before he explains the foundation of a sinner's hope, the manner of our acceptance with God, and the immense blessings secured to them who believe.

Now, is this anxiety to get at the hearts and consciences of their auditories, to convince them of their criminality and wretchedness; is this dark delineation of the natural character of man, and denunciation of the wrath of God against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men: is this what might have been expected from the accred-

ited ministers of a system, the substance and essence of which are, that God for Christ's sake loves every human creature, has redeemed all by the blood of his Son, blotted out their iniquities, and placed them in a state of grace?

The example of such men, who wrote and spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, is to us warrant sufficient to go and do likewise. Higher authority we need not: but if it were necessary, we have greater witness than theirs. Their practice was exemplified and consecrated by the Prince of preachers. The Lord Jesus Christ opened his ministry by preaching, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. He discoursed with Nicodemus respecting the new birth, before he told him of the love of God to the world, and the way of salvation by faith. He declared that he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. And when leaving the earth, he assured his disciples that the Holy Ghost would walk in his steps. "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you: but if I go away, I will send him. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment."

III. Does this scheme agree with the scriptural account of prayer for spiritual blessings?

In close connection with the tenets already examined, is the idea that prayer for spiritual bless-

ings, such as mercy, pardon, and righteousness, is irrational and criminal.

Believers, we are told, are the children of God, the brethren of Christ, the heirs of his kingdom, and entitled to all the riches of grace and treasures of glory. And since all things are already theirs by the free gift and the irrevocable grant of the unchangeable Jehovah; it is as absurd and foolish to pray for these blessings, as to entreat the removal of the deluge or the formation of heaven.

But notwithstanding the confidence with which this notion is urged, it is scarcely possible to open any book of the sacred volume, without meeting with prayers for such blessings. The greater part of the Psalms consist of petitions for such blessings. These prayers are frequently found, where the most *express promises are given for bestowing the blessings* which the petitioner supplicates; and *these promises* are urged as the *plea* for their possession.

Though at the very interview at which Nathan brought the crime of his sovereign to remembrance, he assured him that the Lord had put away his sin; yet mark with what importunity and fervour in the fifty-first Psalm, David solicits the remission of the very sin, which he was told was put away, and washing from the very blood which was already cleansed.

No man can be godly whose sins are not pardoned: and yet within four verses after he had

pronounced that man blessed whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered, David adds, "For this, (the forgiveness of sin,) shall every one that is godly make his prayer to thee." Psalm xxxii. 1—6.

When Nathan had communicated the gracious designs of God to David and his family; instead of imagining that there was any thing unreasonable or sinful in imploring the fulfilment of the promised blessings, David immediately subjoined, "O Lord God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said." 2 Sam. vii. 25.

When Daniel understood by books that the years foretold by Jeremiah for the desolation of Jerusalem were expiring; instead of making this a reason for suppressing his own wishes before God, he took occasion from the certainty of the event, to pray more earnestly than ever for its accomplishment. Dan. ix.

The epistle to the Colossians is inscribed "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colosse." No sooner, however, has the Apostle expressed his joy and gratitude for their christian graces and spiritual attainments, the hope laid up for them in heaven, and their love in the Spirit; than he subjoins, "For which cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to *pray* for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual

understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness: giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Col. i. 9—12.

The epistle to the Ephesians is addressed "To the saints who are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." It opens with the following words: "Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with *all spiritual blessings* in heavenly places in Christ." And yet before he has advanced fifteen verses, the same Apostle, who thanks God for having already blessed them with all spiritual blessings, declares, I "cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understandings being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Ephes. i. 16—18. A little farther onwards, we find him using the language which is here transcribed, in behalf of the same people, "For this

cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your heart by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of God which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” Ephes. iii. 14—19.

I know nothing that is more sure, than the enjoyment by believers of all the blessings of grace. They flow from the unchanging love of God: they are included in the everlasting covenant, secured by the promise of the Lord: and ratified and sealed by the costly sacrifice of Immanuel. But so far is this unequalled security from either superseding the necessity of prayer, or rendering its exercise unlawful; that there is scarcely a blessing promised in any part of revelation, which is not, in some other part of the sacred volume, made the subject of express supplication. We are commanded to “be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let our requests be known unto God.” So far from prohibiting the exercise of prayer for blessings whose attainment is infallible, at the close of an interesting series of precious promises, we meet with this important declaration:

“ Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of the house of Israel, to do it for them.” Ezek. xxxvi. 37. And so far from being interdicted from pleading for grace and mercy because we have already received them in Christ, we are actually enjoined to “ come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Heb. iv. 16.

What is still more singular, “ the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

And if any thing can be more extraordinary, it is that the Lord Jesus Christ, who well knows the absolute immutability of all the promises, and the perfect safety of all them who believe, is our *Advocate* with God, and ever lives to make *intercession* for us.

I must earnestly entreat the reader to be on his guard against this spurious orthodoxy, which lays an interdict on praying for any spiritual blessing which is given along with Christ. If the principle on which it is founded were carried out to its full extent it would render the world a scene of confusion, havoc, and desolation: and if you admit it into your creed or your conduct, if ever your soul was possessed of any spiritual life and peace, it is likely to lay the whole in ruins, and involve you in wretchedness too great for utterance.

The graceless hate every form of godliness, and

have a strong repugnance to prayer. If believers are prohibited from praying for spiritual blessings, because all things are given along with Christ: the ungodly will naturally ask, Why should they pray for any blessing at all; since God who made them, may be expected, without their solicitude, to give them all that is requisite for their welfare as long as he is pleased to preserve them in being? Since God has promised to give what is good, why should the idle labour for their daily bread? Since God from everlasting has been infinitely glorious; the infidel may inquire, why he should be restrained from any profligacy, and commanded to do all to the glory of God? If the gift of Christ supersedes prayer; why, says the Antinomian, should we be required to attend to any duty at all?

The doctrine in question is a sad abuse of the purposes and gifts of God. Though he has formed his decrees from everlasting, they are accomplished in time, and by the instrumentality, of his creatures. By the righteousness of Christ grace and glory are secured for his people. But though the purchase of the whole was simultaneous, they are dispensed in succession. The light was created at once: but its rays reach us one after another. And though every spiritual blessing is included in the gift of Christ; yet the blessings of salvation are bestowed in detail, and as we are able and qualified to receive them. Neither the knowledge, holiness, nor comfort of believers are

complete at the first moment of their spiritual life. If this were the case, we should never hear of young men and babes in the christian family. All should be equally fathers. There would be no necessity for exhorting those who have already believed, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, and to go on to perfection. But with such exhortations the Scriptures abound.

It is presumptuous and dangerous to set up our own theories and fancies in opposition to the plainest dictates of Inspiration. Our business is to search the Scriptures and submit implicitly to their decision. There we find the promises pledged, that what is good the Lord will give; he will preserve us alive, and we shall be fed. We know that with him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. But in opposition to the theorist who should maintain, that these promises release us from the necessity of labour, and render prayer for temporal mercies unlawful; we can appeal to an authority as high as that which passed these promises, enjoining us to be diligent in business, and commanding us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

And though it hath pleased the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell; and since he has not spared him, but given him up for us all, will also with him freely give us all things: yet because the continued enjoyment of these, is just as necessary for our safety and happiness, as their initial possession; the Lord commands us to pray

for all spiritual blessings, and promises to hear and answer our requests. Hence we are assured that his grace is sufficient for us, and his strength made perfect in weakness; that we grow up in all things unto him who is the head; and out of his fulness receive even grace for grace.

Prayer is of no real service to the Most High. It can neither alter his mind, nor increase his information. But it is of prodigious importance to ourselves. It makes us feel our weakness and dependence. It renders our desires for spiritual blessings more steady and intense; and gives a greater warmth and elevation to our adoring gratitude, when we find the God of grace, day after day, imparting the blessings we implore.

CHAPTER V.

OF FAITH AND THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

IF an Israelite, who understood the import of the Divine ordinance, had been asked how he expected to be cured of the bite of the fiery flying serpents; he would not have said by believing that the brazen serpent was the antidote to their sting, or that it had annihilated their poison, and had already secured the congregation against all

danger from their attacks. He would have said that he expected a cure by looking at the serpent of brass. It was distinctly stated in the promise, "It shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he *looketh* upon it," the serpent of brass, "shall live." And it is as plainly recorded in the narrative, that "if a serpent had bitten any man, when he *beheld* the serpent of brass, he lived."

From the beginning to the end of the sacred volume, Christ and his work are held up as the only objects of saving faith. Christ and his righteousness are the sun and centre of the whole expanse of revelation. He is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the ending. He is all, and in all. And saving faith is represented as such a belief of the truth concerning him as leads the soul to rest, trust, and depend on him and his righteousness, for all its salvation.

In the Berean scheme, the object of saving faith is, that Christ is the propitiation for sin, that he has atoned for the guilt of the whole world, and redeemed and pardoned all the children of Adam.

Now, the question is, Is this notion correct?

Whatever may be the doctrinal object of saving faith, the testimony which it credits, it certainly must be something which is true in itself, prior to our knowledge or belief of its reality; and which would remain immutably the same, though the whole human race should reject it.

This seems evident from the fact, that saving faith is made the duty of every child of Adam. Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." St. John adds, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." And one of the last injunctions of our Redeemer, before his ascension to glory, was, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Now, unless faith is the duty of all, how can every man who dies without it be subjected to perdition? The dreadful consequences with which unbelief is attended, prove that it is insufferably offensive and odious in the sight of God, and a crime possessed of uncommon enormity and danger. But a sin it could not be, unless the thing which we are required to believe were true in itself, independently of all our own notions and opinions. To believe without evidence is credulity; and to believe against evidence is madness. The God of truth never will enjoin us to believe a falsehood, nor punish us for rejecting a lie. Whenever he interposes his authority, and demands our assent, there we may trust with the most perfect safety and unhesitating confidence.

It is true that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; the same in substance, equal in power and glory with the Father; that he became man, was made under the law; fulfilled all righteousness, and

gave his life a ransom for many. It is true that he is the propitiation for sin; that his power is almighty, and his atonement all-sufficient. It is true that the calls of the gospel are universal; that the offers of salvation are free; and that the promise of acceptance to every one who comes to Christ, is without limitation or reserve.

All these are facts supported by the truth and faithfulness of the Most High. Over the wide surface of the earth, every sinner is warranted, encouraged, commanded to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and though none will embrace the invitation nor submit to the command, till they discover their guilt and wretchedness as transgressors of the righteous law, and long for deliverance from the presence and the power of sin; yet every one that comes is made most heartily, most inexpressibly welcome; and whosoever rests on him entirely, and makes him all his salvation and all his desire, shall never perish nor come into condemnation, but have everlasting life.

These are the true sayings of God; and they constitute a foundation more firm than the pillars that sustain creation. But is this the nature of the foundation which the Berean system has laid for its votaries? Is it true that Christ has died for every man; redeemed all the human race; and forgiven the sins of the whole world? Where within the wide compass of revelation can any such declarations be found?

We never can do justice to his power and gen-

erosity. Neither the tongues of men nor of angels can reach the perfection of his righteousness, the riches of his grace, and the freeness of his love. His blood cleanseth from all sin; and he is able to save them to the uttermost who come to God by him. He is the propitiation for sin; the Mediator betwixt God and man; the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He came to seek and to save that which was lost: and we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of his grace.

But does it follow from these general expressions, that he died for every individual, and has actually taken away the sins of the whole world?

Unless a thing can, at the same time and in the same sense, be removed and yet remain, the sins of the whole world cannot be said to be taken away: for at this moment sin is reigning in the heart, and bringing everlasting ruin upon the souls of millions.

To shew that the gospel is not confined to any nation, age, class, or description of men; but adapted to the circumstances of each, and designed for the salvation of as many of every nation and character as the Lord is pleased to call: its invitations and offers are addressed indiscriminately to the whole world. But it can no more be inferred from the general and indefinite language which it employs, that Christ actually died for all, and has redeemed every man; than that all are justi-

fied, because it is said that "the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life;" that all are blessed with the Holy Ghost, because God promises to pour out his "Spirit upon all flesh;" that all are spiritually illuminated, because Christ is called "the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" or that all are actually attracted to him, because he declared, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

The extent of the Redeemer's death is a secret thing which belongs unto the Lord. It is enough for us to know that his power is almighty, and his atonement possessed of infinite value; that "his heart is made of tenderness, his bowels melt with love." Omnipotence is requisite for the formation of a worm; and more is not required for the formation of a seraph. Less than the perfect righteousness of Immanuel could not have satisfied the demands of law and justice, and secured the salvation of a single soul: but more than this, if they had needed redemption, could not have been necessary for the salvation of the whole universe.

But amidst the brightest and most overbearing evidence for the perfection of his righteousness and the ail-sufficiency of his atonement; what proof can we discover that he died for all, and has redeemed all.

In speaking of the salvation of those who actually become partakers of eternal glory, the Scrip-

tures uniformly ascribe their salvation to the death of Christ, or their being redeemed by his blood. Rom. iii. 24. v. 10. viii. 34. Gal. iii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 18. Rev. v. 9. Acts xx. 28. Ephes. v. 25—27. This salvation must be owing either in whole, or in part to his death. If it is owing only in part to his death: then, how could the Apostle appeal to his death as the sole cause of deliverance from condemnation; from the curse of the law; and as the only ground of acceptance with God? Saying, “Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died:” “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us.” And how could the spirits of the just made perfect, ascribe all their salvation to his death? Saying, “thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”

But if the salvation of all who are brought to glory is owing entirely to his death: then, if he died for all, why do any perish? Unless the same cause produces opposite effects: since his death has placed in heaven all the children of men who have obtained admission there; if he has died alike for all, all must alike partake of salvation with eternal glory. I know that all those whom he ransoms from the power of the grave, and redeems from death, shall rise from the dead; and that, the moment that he issues the mandate, the grave shall be as completely clear of the dust of the human race, as it was on the day that Adam first set his foot within the confines of

Eden. And if he died for the redemption of the entire species; what prevents the complete salvation of all the children of men, any more than the resurrection of the whole human race from the grave?

He that receives the vine, is entitled to the fruit. God has no greater gift than that of his Son: and if he did not spare him, but delivered him up for the whole race; why do any not enjoy the blessings secured by his death?

We shall perhaps be told that some do not believe.

But if Christ died alike for all, why do any continue in unbelief?

Faith is either a spiritual blessing, or it is not. If it is not a spiritual blessing, why is it declared to be the gift of God? and why is the possession of it by some represented as certain and infallible? Ephes. ii. 8. Phil. i. 29. Heb. xii. 2. John vi. 37, 45. xii. 32. Psalm cx. 3.

But if it is a spiritual blessing: then it is one of the effects of the Redeemer's death: for the Apostle assures us that we "are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ." Ephes. i. 3. Col. ii. 10.

Now, the question is, Has Christ purchased this blessing for all, or only for some? If he has purchased it only for some: then the cause of universal redemption is gone; and it is admitted that he did not die for all. For if the effect of his death depend upon a condition, which none but he can

bestow, and which he never undertook, promised nor intended to impart; this is saying in other words that the object of his death was limited.

But if he has purchased faith for all, why is it not possessed by all? Is he unable to bestow it? Is any thing too hard for him? Who hath resisted his will? When he chose to create the universe, and gave the command for its formation: did he experience any difficulty to find obedience to his word? When he was pleased to breathe on the slain, did any of the bones baffle his will to restore them to life? When on a future day he shall give the command; will any of the tenants of the tomb defeat the execution of his decree, and retain their place in the dust of the earth? And if such were his pleasure, is he unable to pierce the hardest heart, and implant faith in the most refractory and unbelieving spirit? After the obstacles which he has already surmounted; is there any wonder of power and love which he is unable to perform? Could he have found it more difficult to soften the heart of Pharaoh, than of Lydia; or to convert Judas than Paul? Of his power we can entertain no doubt: for he is able even to subdue all things to himself, neither is there any thing too hard for him.

If Jesus purchased faith for all; we ask again, Since without faith no man can be saved, why do any continue in unbelief? Perhaps we shall be told, that God does not see fit to confer it, or

that it is inconsistent with his wisdom to bestow it.

Is this really the case? Are we really to suppose that it was consistent with his wisdom to require his Son to purchase with his blood, blessings which he does not judge it proper to confer? and give him up to die in behalf of those, whom, even after they have been redeemed at such an infinite price, he does not think it worth his while to save?

God is either omniscient, or not. If he is not omniscient: then he is not an infinite Being and unlimited in all his perfections; and those Scriptures must be false which ascribe to him an understanding that is unsearchable, and a knowledge that is infallible and extends to all things, whether past, present, or future.

But if he is omniscient: then known unto him are all his works from the beginning of the world; and the Spirit of grace shall not convert a different soul, nor one more, nor less, than what he foresaw from of old from everlasting. And if, as the Scriptures affirm, with him there is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning; then he not only infallibly foreknew the objects of his saving mercy, but provided the measures necessary to render their salvation certain. The operations of his grace in time unfold his eternal counsels of peace and kindness. And when time has finished its course; when the transactions of the great day of

decision are done, and the awful realities of eternity have succeeded to the toils and distractions of mortality; it shall be found that the church of the living God has received, and the gates of celestial bliss have enclosed none but those whom he himself from everlasting had determined to bring through grace to endless glory. John vi. 37, Rom. viii. 29, 30; Ephes. i. 4—6.

And when Jesus from the beginning knew who were given to him, and who were not; who should believe, and who should continue in unbelief: is it credible that he died alike for both?

Is this the idea that we are to entertain of the infinitely wise God? No. Where the small favour has been withheld, we may conclude that the mighty, the matchless gift has not been communicated. If Jesus had died for all: then the meaning of the Apostle's language and the bearing of his reasoning compel us to affirm, that all alike should have shared in the riches of his grace and the blessings of his salvation. Rom. v. 10 : viii. 32.

Redemption was either undertaken with, or without a plan. If it was undertaken without a plan: then, though no rational man will embark in any momentous undertaking without considering fully what he is to do; we must believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; in entering on this most arduous task, connected with so

many affecting interests, and subjecting him to a series of sufferings and sorrows, such as eternity never saw before, nor shall witness again; rushed into the midst of its toils and its conflicts without concert or design, and actually threw his life away without knowing either for whom or for what he died. If redemption was undertaken without a plan; why is it called a counsel, a purpose, a covenant, and designated by similar names indicative of forethought and determination?

But if it was undertaken with a plan: then both the parties for whom Jesus interposed must have been foreknown, and the benefits which they were to receive arranged and fixed. For there could be no plan at all, unless it embraced both the persons for whom he was given, and the blessings which he was to secure.

Accordingly, on looking into the pages of inspiration, we find that both the parties were known, and the blessings determined for which Jesus was to lay down his life. The parties for whom he interposed are denominated "those whom God did foreknow; who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; who were appointed to obtain salvation; who were given to him by his Father; his sheep; his church; his children."

Now, can it be said that these epithets belong to all mankind? that every child of Adam is included in the covenant of grace? and is to be ranked amongst the elect, the chosen of Christ, his

sheep, his children? Where is it said that he has loved the world, and given himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious world not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing? that he is the head of his body, the world? and hath purchased the world with his own blood?

Was his intention to die for all indiscriminately intimated, by his declaring that he had power over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as his Father had given him? that he laid down his life for the sheep? and prayed not for the world but for them who were given him out of the world? Though his Father hears him always, can we believe that he died for those for whom he will not intercede?

Though faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; and men cannot hear without a preacher; did Jesus shew his design to die for all, by confining his ministry to the Jews? by speaking to the Pharisees in parables? by sending his Apostles into one country, but forbidding them to enter another? by giving some eyes to see and ears to hear, and not giving these eyes and ears to others to this day? Is it credible that he gave his life a ransom for those to whom he would not make known the mysteries of his kingdom, nor send the knowledge of his salvation? Luke viii. 10: Acts xvi. 6, 7, 10.

Has he forbidden us to pray for the remission

of the sin against the Holy Ghost? and yet with the full knowledge of all that shall be guilty of this blasphemy: are we to believe that he actually laid down his life for the redemption of the very men for whom we are prohibited to pray?

The Scriptures throughout proclaim a wonderful difference in the everlasting condition of the human race; and intimate that there is as complete a contrast at present in their conduct and character. In the last sight that we get of these two great classes, they appear under the opposite forms of sheep and goats. Before that, they are often mentioned under the widely different characters of righteous and wicked, the children of light and the children of darkness, the children of God and of the devil.

Now, was there ever a time when the seed of the serpent belonged to the woman? when the children of the devil were of the household of faith? the objects of God's love? and when it was his purpose to save them? If such was his intention, what has prevented their salvation? Is there variableness with God? or has any resisted his will? When to the serpent he said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel:" did this indicate a design to convert the seed of the serpent into the seed of the woman; to change their enmity to love; to give up his Son to death for the redemp-

tion of those whom he commissioned him to destroy; and encircle with a diadem of glory those heads which from the beginning he had determined to crush?

If Christ undertook the redemption of the whole world, and died for every man; why do any perish? Is his blood unable to wash away their guilt, and possessed of only a limited efficacy? Has he encountered difficulties with which he is unable to grapple; and, in spite of all his solicitude to save, met with cases too complicated for his skill to manage, or too hard and refractory for his power and grace to soften and subdue? If a single soul, whom his Father has intrusted to his charge, were to sink into perdition; into what consternation and horror would this plunge the whole church of the Lord! All heaven would stand aghast, and terror seize those who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them, if the Rock of ages began to shake, and the foundation of God to give way. If he were to allow one, whom his Father had given him, to perish; what confidence could any of us retain that he would keep what we have committed to him? Can he be more attentive to our interests than to his Father's commands? He is faithful to his trust. On the ashes of the universe he can say, "Here am I and the children whom thou hast given me: those whom thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." And whatever sounds through

the long lapse of endless ages may issue from the prison of despair, one complaint shall never be heard against his fidelity or power.

From the preceding facts I think we are entitled to maintain that Jesus knew for whom he interposed, and that the parties included in the covenant of grace were not the whole of the descendants of Adam.

We must add that, while the parties were selected for whom he undertook, the benefits were also provided which he was to procure.

Unless this is the case the covenant could not be said to be ordered in all things, nor believers to be complete in Christ, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in him.

But if the covenant is ordered in all things and sure, and the gift of Christ conveys a right to all things; then we may conclude that this covenant contains every thing necessary for our holiness and happiness on earth, and our blessedness and glory in heaven. It is not confined to the offers of salvation and the outward means of grace. It was not designed merely to break down some external barriers, and bring man into a salvable state: to place salvation in the sight of all, but secure it for none: to promise much, but perform nothing: to hold out an appearance of safety to every man, but leave the whole to perish. It secures salvation with eternal glory; the gift of the Holy Spirit; a new heart; faith to receive the Son of God; abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness;

the first fruits of the Spirit, and an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Ezek. xxxvi. 25—28: Jer. xxxi. 31—34; xxxii. 38—42: Heb. viii. 7—13: Rom. v. 15—21; viii. 28—30: 2 Cor. v. 21: Ephes. i. 3—14; v. 25—28: Mat. xxv. 34.

Now these blessings have either been placed in the everlasting covenant and secured by Christ for all mankind, or they have not. If they have not: then the cause of universal redemption is abandoned: for if they were not provided and procured for all, it is evident that they never were designed for all.

But if they have been purchased for all men, why are they withheld from any? Has Jesus fulfilled every part of his undertaking: and yet has the Father disregarded his own engagements? O but the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart unto all generations! He keeps his word with his enemies: and will he break his covenant and oath with his own Son? No: he is a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he. He is ever mindful of his covenant. Since Jesus has made his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand: he shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

If Christ has died alike for all, his death has produced its full effect upon all. Every man

without exception has obtained, or will obtain, all that the death of Christ can bestow. But in the case of the impenitent and unbelieving, it has neither delivered them from hell nor raised them to heaven. And since it has exhausted its energy upon them, without imparting either grace or glory; it necessarily follows that believers, who receive both, are indebted for their salvation to something altogether different from his death. Instead of doing honour to this marvellous manifestation of mercy, this hypothesis strips the death of Christ of all its importance and grandeur, and reduces it to comparative insignificance.

In behalf of those for whom he interposed, Jesus either placed himself in their room, or he did not. If he did not: then, why is he in Scripture uniformly held up as their head and representative, their substitute and surety? Isa. liii. 4—6: Mat. i. 21: Gal. iii. 13: Col. i. 18: Heb. vi. 20; vii. 22.

But if he placed himself in their room; then he either endured what they deserved, or he did not. If he did not: then why is it said that he gave his life a ransom for many? that he was delivered for our offences? that he died for our sins? that he was wounded for our transgressions? bruised for our iniquities? that the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all? that he was made sin and a curse for us, and that he hath purchased the church with his own blood? Mat. xx. 28: Tit. ii.

14: Isa. liii. 4—6: 2 Cor. v. 21: Gal. iii. 13: Acts xx. 28.

But if our sins have been laid upon him, and he has in his own person sustained the punishment which they deserved: then he is entitled to the pardon of all for whom he died, not as a matter of discretion, but of promise, agreement, or rather of rigid equity. When the debt is paid, no matter whether by the principal or surety; justice is satisfied, and both are entitled to their discharge. And if Jesus has borne the chastisement due to all the sins of the human race; he is authorized to claim the full acquittal of the whole, and justice must be violated if a single soul be subjected to future misery. This is to exact from the sinner in hell, the penalty which was sustained by the Son of God on Calvary.

Besides, in behalf of all whom he represented, Christ either merited grace and glory, or he did not. If he did not: what do the Scriptures mean by affirming, that he has restored that which he took not away? that by his stripes we are healed? that he fulfilled all righteousness? brought in everlasting righteousness? perfected for ever them that are sanctified? that he not only died for our offences, but rose again for our justification? that he was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him? that he not only purchased the church with his own blood, but that heaven itself is a purchased possession? Psalm

lxix. 4: 2 Pet. ii. 24: Rom. iv. 24: Dan. ix. 24: *
Ephes. i. 14.

But if the obedience of Christ was meritorious of grace and glory for all whom he undertook to redeem, they must be saved. It is iniquitous to keep back the hire of the labourer. And is it equitable to deprive the Son of God of the fruits of his perfect obedience and unparalleled sufferings? If, therefore, he undertook the redemption of the whole world, and obeyed the law equally for all, all must alike be saved. But as multitudes perish, this is sufficient proof that he did not represent all men. If he had represented the wicked in his passive obedience only, so as to deliver them from the penalty; why are they subjected to punishment? But if he represented them both in his active and passive obedience so as to invest them with a positive title to heaven; why are they not only deprived of everlasting life, but also consigned to eternal misery? .

* In the face of all the scriptural declarations that Christ is the propitiation for sin, and has by his death made reconciliation for iniquity; that God is angry with the wicked, and pacified towards his people: as if God were the offender and man the offended party, the old Socinian dogma has lately been revived; that God is never said to be reconciled to the world, but always represented as reconciling the world to himself. To support this notion reference is made to Mat. v. 23, 24. But, pray, how could the offender be reconciled to his brother but by making reparation for his offence?

Unable to discover any evidence that Christ has redeemed and pardoned all men, and that saving faith can consist in the belief of these assertions: the question still recurs, what is saving faith?

The answer may be easily obtained by attending once more to the case of the stung Israelites. The brazen serpent was the antidote to the bite of the fiery flying serpents. It was the pain produced by the wound inflicted by these reptiles, which occasioned the Israelites to look to that figure. The benefit which they wanted was a cure. This they obtained by actually looking at the serpent on the pole. And it was the proclamation made by Moses which announced its virtues to the camp, and encouraged all the wounded to have recourse to it for healing.

Christ is the ordinance of God for the salvation of our guilty world. It is by the gospel, or word of God, that Christ and his righteousness are revealed. It is a sense of guilt and wretchedness that induces any sinner to betake himself to the Saviour. The blessing which he needs is salvation. And this he obtains by such a belief of the record which God has given concerning his Son, as leads him to receive and rest on Christ alone for salvation.

Do you ask, What is the record which God has given concerning his Son? You must go to the Bible for an answer. You will there find that Jesus is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person: that by him were all

things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible: that he is before all things, and by him all things consist: that he was made under the law, to redeem them who are under the law: that being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: that he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed: that God made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him: that he is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth: that he came to seek and to save that which was lost: that his blood cleanseth from all sin, and that he is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him: that whosoever will may come, and him that cometh he will in no wise cast out."

Such is a short outline of the testimony which God has borne to his Son. But though there can be no saving faith without the belief of this testimony; the belief of this, of any truth, or of the whole truths of revelation, is perfectly useless, unless it leads the soul to receive and rest on the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation. The stung Israelite was not cured by simply believing the truth of the proclamation concerning the brazen serpent; but by actually looking at it. And we are not saved by barely believing the report concerning Christ; but by believing it so as to re-

ceive him for our own Saviour, and trust in him for our own salvation.

There is no possibility of bringing a sinner too soon to the Saviour; of making the access to the cross too free, and the approach too simple and easy; nor of bringing a soul too fully to renounce every thing for Christ, and rest too entirely on him alone for all that it needs in time or through eternity. He is the way, the truth and the life: and our safety depends, not on the process by which we reach him, but upon the reality of our winning him, and being found in him.

No man, however, will savingly believe on Christ till sensible of his guilt and danger, any more than an Israelite would have looked at the brazen serpent till he felt himself wounded by the venomous reptiles. What need have the whole for a physician? What occasion have those who are in safety, to flee to a place of refuge? And what desire can those entertain for an almighty and all-sufficient Saviour, who are ignorant of their own total depravity and absolute wretchedness and ruin as sinners? The gospel never can be prized till the excellence and glory of the law are known; nor Jesus become precious to any soul till that soul find itself perishing.

Hence amongst the most glaring proofs of the wickedness of the world, and the clearest evidence of the deep depravity of every individual, multitudes give themselves no concern about the great salvation. Amidst the most endearing evidence

of the power, the love, and glory of Immanuel; and the most earnest and urgent invitations to embrace the immense and inexhaustible treasures of his grace: they disdainfully turn on their heel, and walk off to their farms, their merchandise, and amusements. Hence it becomes necessary to preach the law as well as the gospel: to tell our brethren of their relation to God as rational creatures, of their dependence upon his power, and accountableness to his justice; as well as to unfold the love, and proclaim the compassion, generosity, and all-sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ. And hence the necessity of plying men with every argument and motive which reason and religion can supply, or kindness can adopt, to shut men up unto the faith, and constrain them to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ.

For though faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; we must never for a moment forget the oft-repeated truth, that no faith is genuine which terminates in the mere belief of doctrines. The only faith which can either sanctify or save, is that which leads the soul to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and make him all its salvation and all its desire. The Bereans tell us that faith is knowledge. But without dwelling on the impropriety of confounding two things so completely different; and without enumerating instances in which men firmly believe what we know to be absolutely false: I must affirm that we may assent to the truth of every syllable in the creed, make

ourselves masters of the whole doctrines of revelation, and cram our heads with the learning of libraries; and yet be as destitute of real religion, as before we began the laborious task. Simon Magus believed. Judas and many apostates knew, and preached the gospel. And, if any man imagines that his knowledge or belief will save him, let him reflect on the case of the devils. There is neither ignorance nor scepticism in hell. There is no doctrine which they do not understand, nor any truth which they dare to deny. They believe and tremble.

Accordingly wherever faith is mentioned in Scripture, whether in direct terms or in figurative representations; it is uniformly spoken of in such language as to shew, that its ultimate object is not the doctrinal propositions concerning Christ, but Christ himself; and that it never can be sound and genuine till it lead the heart to trust in him entirely, and rest on him alone.

Take for example the following declarations. "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth *on me* should not abide in darkness." "Ye believe in God, believe also *in me*." "Look *unto me*, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth." "Come *unto me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." John xii. 46; xiv. 1: Isa. xlv. 22: Mat. xi. 28. See also John xii. 36: Acts xvi. 31: 2 Cor. iv. 6.

Is Christ represented by the serpent of brass? Then he himself declares that the gospel of this

is, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth *in him* should not perish, but have eternal life.” Is he represented by the cities of refuge? Then, we are informed, that he is appointed for the protection, not of those who believe that there is salvation in him, or that he has saved them already, but of those “who flee for refuge to *lay hold on* the hope set before them.” Is he represented as a fountain? It is not to refresh and gladden those who remain in the dry and parched places of the wilderness, and imagine that it is enough to know or believe that such a fountain exists; but those who actually *come* to him and *drink*.” John. vii. 37, 38: Rev. xxii. 17.

In short, by whatever terms faith is represented, it is uniformly implied that it is the reposing of the soul, the fastening of the heart on Christ and his work, and not on our own privileges and safety. Without receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, we may believe what we please; familiarize our minds with the whole circle of theology; be able to define to an iota every article of doctrine; and argue unanswerably for every branch of the christian system: and yet be in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. But, however limited its acquisitions and confused its views, the soul that receives him is safe. “As many as received,” not the belief of his love or of their interest in his death, but “as many as received *him*, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even as many as be-

lieve on his name." John i. 12: 1 Cor. xiii: Rom. x. 10.

On the other hand the ruin of the soul arises, not from a doubt of the love of God, the all-sufficiency of Christ, or of our own safety; but from refusing to believe on the only begotten Son of God. Many, like the Pharisees have entertained high ideas of their nearness to God, and of their own security for eternity; who, having never believed on the Lord Jesus, have all along been the children of disobedience and of wrath.

Unbelief is not a rejection of comfort, but of Christ. It is not a blindness to our own safety, but to his glory. It is not a denial of our own good state in the world to come, but disobedience to his authority. John iii. 18, 19; v. 40—44: Luke xix. 27.

"Those by the way-side are they that hear, then cometh the devil, and taketh away" their interest in the love of God? the death of Christ? or the forgiveness of sins? "and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe, and be saved." "He that believeth not?" his own salvation? "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION—CONCLUDING REMARKS.

AFTER razing the firmest foundations of hope, by maintaining that many who have been beloved of God, and redeemed and pardoned by the death of Christ, are now in the deeps of perdition; with a strange inconsistency, the Bereans affirm that the assurance of salvation is absolutely essential to the existence of faith, and inseparable from a state of grace. “The language of the Bible is, that Christ is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, and that he that believeth on him shall be saved. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar: because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. Can a living man be at a loss to determine if he is alive? Can a man with eyes find any difficulty to decide if it is the sun that at noon-day is shining on him? Or can a man who is possessed of faith feel any greater perplexity to ascertain if he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ? The direct testimony of the Scriptures, saying, He that believeth shall be saved, is a far more clear and infallible proof of

the faith and safety of the Christian, than all the evidence which he can collect from the wide range of reason and experience."

A few remarks are requisite upon the idea that every believer must be possessed of the assurance of his own salvation, and upon the manner in which it is supposed that he obtains this assurance.

Let us attend to the notion.

I. That every believer must be possessed of an assurance of his own salvation.

It is to be observed that we are here to treat of the assurance of salvation. There is a wide difference betwixt it and the assurance of faith. The assurance of faith is the belief of the truths of Christianity. The foundation of this is as firm and immoveable as the throne of the Eternal. When the believer, enlightened by the Spirit of all grace, has a clear discovery of the nature, the extent, the excellence, and the glory of the gospel; he can no more doubt its reality than his own existence or the being of God.

The assurance of salvation, however, is quite another thing. It does not consist in a belief of the truths of revelation, but of our own interest in the blessings which they contain: in the knowledge that we are believers in Christ, and the confident hope that through him we shall enjoy everlasting salvation. From the great and permanent change which takes place upon the believer at conversion; from the promises of peace and joy to real Christ-

ians, and the certainty that we shall know if we follow on to know the Lord; from the injunctions to make our calling and election sure; and the examples of believers who have arrived at the full assurance of hope: it is obvious that the assurance of salvation is an attainable blessing, and that it is the privilege and duty of every Christian to labour to secure it, and to live under its elevating and ennobling influence.

But while we admit that it is an attainable blessing; we are obliged to affirm that it is neither essential to the nature of faith nor inseparable from a state of grace.

Indeed, if any man could persuade us, that Christ has redeemed and pardoned all; we could have little hesitation to allow that the assurance of salvation would invariably accompany the existence of faith, and might be obtained from the direct testimony of God, He that believeth shall be saved: for in such a case, if not altogether, we should at least be almost safe, whether we believe or not. But if we cannot admit that any are pardoned before they believe, or that God loves any except those whom he has given to his Son to be sanctified and saved: it will be long before we can be satisfied that the mere announcement of the gospel conveys an assurance of our personal salvation. Did the Bible either expressly affirm that all men shall be saved, or contain a list of those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life; the simple statement of such a fact

would give believers at least if not all men complete assurance of salvation. But when instead of affirming either that all shall be saved, or enumerating the individuals whose names are written in heaven, the Scriptures only declare that "he that believeth shall be saved:" what is the necessary result? Why; that salvation is confined to believers: and therefore, before I can become certain of my own salvation, I must be sure that I am a believer.

It will not do to assert, that we may as confidently infer our personal salvation from the declaration that Christ "is the Saviour of the world;" as that we may argue our personal condemnation and ruin from the words, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Betwixt these two cases there is the widest possible difference. The language in the latter case, is universally true. It allows neither exception nor qualification. It includes the whole human race: and though all should concur in rejecting it; though they should believe themselves innocent and safe, and cling with the firmest tenacity to this delusion: still by nature they are lost and undone, without God and without hope.

From the universal extent of this language I am compelled to infer its application to myself. But where is such language employed respecting the extent of the Redemer's death? Where is it said or insinuated that he is the spiritual Saviour of all men, and that every child of Adam shall en-

ter the kingdom of heaven and inherit eternal life? Is such an inference as this to be drawn from the complaint, that men will not come to Christ that they may have life? from the declaration that many are called but few are chosen? and that the Lord shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power?

The sacred volume most loudly proclaims a doctrine, completely opposed to the notion of universal salvation. The calls, invitations, and offers of the gospel are uniformly addressed to all: and every human creature without exception is required to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The promise of salvation however is quite another matter. It is special, and expressly limited to those who believe. The command "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;" the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" are an ample encouragement and warrant for all men to look to him for salvation, and come to him for rest: but no man has the slightest authority to expect salvation or rest, till he look to Christ and come to him. It is perfectly conclusive to say, All men are mortal: the Americans are men; therefore the Americans are mortal. But

it is quite another thing to say, Every native American is eligible to congress : but the Americans are men ; therefore every man is eligible to congress. And it is true that every believer shall be saved : But is it as true that every man shall be saved ? Unless he is possessed of that faith, to which the promise of salvation is attached, instead of being saved the Bible denounces his perdition.

Suppose that, by some unexampled catastrophe ; the whole human race, with the exception of one man, were cut off. Suppose that this solitary survivor were an infidel, but that he retained a copy of the Scriptures. Would it follow from the circumstance that he possessed the Bible, that he was also heir to all the blessings which it contains ? The possession of the Scriptures would be an invaluable boon : but from the want of the character to which these blessings are promised, though the destruction of his contemporaries might leave him heir to their fortunes, it could not invest him with a right to the promised blessings. His descent from Adam subjects him to guilt and wretchedness, and amidst the silence and solitude of a desolated world, he would stagger beneath the load of all the depravity and ruin of the species. But with the Bible in his hand, until he himself believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, he could have no warrant to infer his own salvation from the fact, that Christ came to save sinners, or that he died for the ungodly. If from these

general declarations he were authorized to infer his own salvation, without personally believing on the Lord Jesus Christ: then, from the same general language every man at this moment might draw the same inference for himself: and thus, notwithstanding the repeated testimonies of the word of God, that he that believeth not shall be damned; the whole human race might be saved, without one of them actually believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before that singular individual could expect salvation, he would first be obliged to believe the gospel: and he could be no farther assured of salvation, than he was assured that he was a believer. And amidst the many millions, who at present people the globe, none can obtain salvation in any other way than by actually believing on Christ: and he never can be sure of the safety of his state till he knows that he is possessed of faith in the Redeemer.

But though no assurance can be obtained till we are possessed of faith; the Scriptures most distinctly intimate that it is not possessed by all believers, nor a necessary attendant upon a state of grace.

If the assurance of salvation were essential to the existence of faith, the two would not be mentioned as separable and separate. If assurance were necessarily included in faith: then, wherever faith existed, we should be as certain that assurance was enjoyed, as that the presence of the sun is accompanied with light and heat. Every indi-

vidual who is possessed of the one, would be blessed with the other. The two would be implanted in his soul at once: and the one never could be attained subsequently to the other. But is this the case? If it is, how could one Apostle say, "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise?" and how could another add, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth: and hereby we know that we are of the truth, and *shall* assure our hearts before him?"

If faith and assurance are inseparable: then, self-examination would be superfluous. If by the very act of trusting in Christ, every believer obtains the absolute certainty of his own salvation; it would be as idle to enjoin him to examine himself if he is in the faith, as to command him to inquire if he is alive.

If the two are inseparable; why are those who have already believed through grace, exhorted to give diligence to make their calling and election sure, and to give the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end? Such admonitions would be as useless, as to direct a man with eyes to labour to acquire the power of vision.

Assurance is incapable of degrees. I may be more or less persuaded of the truth of a report: but I cannot be more or less sure of it. If I entertain any doubt at all, I am not sure, but uncertain of its reality. If therefore faith placed the believer at once in the complete certainty of his

own salvation; his faith itself, on which this knowledge is founded would be stationary. Grow it could not. It would be as perfect at the beginning as at the end of his course; in the first moment of his spiritual life, as on the day that he enters the world of glory. In such a case how could the Scriptures speak of "faith growing exceedingly? of strong faith? of the full assurance of faith?"

On earth no state of mind can be more joyful and transporting, than to know that we are the children of God, the brethren of Christ, and the heirs of his kingdom. This joy flows from the full assurance of hope. If therefore faith were invariably attended with this assurance, there would be no necessity for making provision for the encouragement, support and consolation of timid, doubting, trembling, dejected, desponding, tempted and forsaken believers. Such characters would be utterly unknown. All men would either be in a state of high hope and overflowing joy, or in a state of condemnation and ruin. But with the Bible in our hands, telling us that a broken and a contrite heart God will not despise; that he strengthens the weak hands and confirms the feeble knees; that he healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds; that he dwells with him that is humble and of a contrite spirit: when we hear Jesus declaring that a bruised reed he will not break, nor quench the smoking flax; that he was anointed to preach good tidings to the

meek, and sent to bind up the broken-hearted; when we hear him opening his mouth in benedictions, and pronouncing his first and best blessings upon the poor in spirit, and upon them that mourn: shall we dare to denounce these objects of Divine compassion and tenderness, as graceless and ungodly characters, without God and Christ, in the gall of bitterness, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever? But since we dare not curse those whom God has blessed: shall we on the other hand, presume to say that such people are possessed of the full assurance of hope, and rejoicing in the prospect of celestial bliss? Is sadness akin to joy? Are those who are walking in darkness overpowered with the blaze of light? Are those who are described under the figures of bruised reeds and smoking flax; strong in faith, and animated by the heart-cheering knowledge of their own interest in the mercies of the everlasting covenant? Are those who are crying, The Lord hath forsaken us, and our Lord hath forgotten us, realizing the unchanging love of their Redeemer, and exulting in the blissful anticipations of eternal glory? To entertain such a belief, and reconcile the actual condition of these persons to the Berean schemes, is as impossible as to unite the east with the west, and make light dwell with darkness.

If the assurance of salvation had been a matter of as great consequence as the Bereans regard it; we might have expected that in Scripture it would

have been represented as an object of incomparable importance, and that the highest encomiums would have been pronounced upon those who possessed it. But the Scriptures attach no such superlative value to the subject. The grand duty which they inculcate is faith in Christ. They speak in the most soothing and animating terms to the humble, the timid, the depressed and mourning. So far from eulogising boldness, security and confidence they exhort those who think they stand, to take heed lest they fall; and not to be high-minded, but to fear. They tell us that the first shall be last, and the last first: and record lamentable instances of the miserable disappointment and dreadful ruin of multitudes, who were perfectly confident of their own safety, and firmly persuaded that their mountain stood strong and that they never should be moved. Psalm xxxvi. 2. Prov. xxx. 12. Isa. v. 21. Mat. vii. 22, 23, xxv. 44. Luke xviii. 9—14. 2 Cor. x. 18.

With these facts before us, we are obliged to reject the idea that assurance of salvation is essential to the nature of faith. An essential quality is something that is absolutely necessary to the being of the object. Its presence secures the existence of the object in which it inheres, and its absence causes its destruction. When, therefore, we see that many have been saved without assurance, and that multitudes, who possessed the strongest confidence in their own safety, have gone to perdition: unless we can suppose that a

thing can both be and not be at the same time, we must conclude that the assurance of salvation is neither essential to the existence of faith nor inseparable from a state of grace.

We must add that we are unable to admit

II. That the assurance of salvation is obtained in the manner that Bereans assert.

They maintain that it arises from our consciousness that we believe the direct testimony of God, saying, that Christ is the Saviour of the world, the propitiation for sin, and that he that believeth on him shall be saved.

If saving faith consisted in a speculative assent to the gospel; or in a persuasion that Christ died for us, has redeemed us, and forgiven all our offences; it would be easy from the presence of such a faith to infer its existence. For every man in the possession of reason, not only may, but actually must be conscious of the operations of his own mind, and perfectly aware of the articles of his creed. Such a man at any time, without a moment's warning, could distinctly tell whether or not he believed that Jesus is the Son of God, that God loves all men, and that Jesus has died for all.

But if the attempt, in the preceding chapter, has been at all successful to prove that saving faith does not consist in a speculative assent to the truth, nor in a persuasion that Christ died for all; but in such a belief of what the Scriptures reveal

concerning his person and work, as leads us to receive him as our own Saviour, and rest on him alone for our own salvation: if the attempt to prove this has been successful, there can be little necessity for spending time in shewing, that assurance cannot be obtained from simply believing that Christ is the Son of God and Saviour of the world, the propitiation for sin, and the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

These are important and precious truths. It is by these, and such as these, that hope first springs up in the soul, and that we are encouraged and emboldened to trust in him for our own salvation. But they are only a part of the testimony which God has given concerning his Son: and for the same reason that he believes any part of revelation because it is the word of God, the Christian will believe all that the Scriptures contain. And while these facts are only a part of revealed truth, we can derive no benefit from them unless we are enabled through the belief of them to rest on Christ himself for salvation. In a shipwreck, what would it profit the mariners to know that the life-boat is near, capacious, buoyant, and safe, and sent out expressly for their preservation; if after all they neglect to embark in it? What could it have availed the stung Israelites to know that the brazen serpent was erected to cure their wounds; if after all they had refused to look at it? And what advantage can we derive from believing that Jesus is the only Saviour, an almighty, all-suffi-

cient Saviour; if after all, through our own infatuation and depravity, we fail to believe on him, trust in him, and make him all our own salvation and all our desire?

From what was lately stated, it will generally be acknowledged that the mere possession of the Scriptures could not give an infidel, even though he were the only inhabitant of our planet, a right to the blessings which they reveal. And if the mere possession of the Scriptures could not give him such a right: could a knowledge of the doctrines which the Bible discloses, convey this right? Certainly not: since the Apostle affirms that we may “understand all mysteries, and all knowledge;” and yet be nothing. Well then, could he obtain this right by a belief, persuasion, or conviction of the truth of its contents? Most assuredly not: for the sacred volume declares that with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness; that the devils *believe* and tremble; and that we may have “all” the faith that is unaccompanied with love, and yet be without God and without hope.

The only faith that can save, is that which endears Christ to the heart; which leads us to delight in him, to rest on him, and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of him: that we may win him and be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Perhaps a Berean may here ask, “Is not our knowing and believing that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, and the propitiation for the sins of the world; the same as the soul’s receiving him and resting on him for its own salvation?” No indeed: unless the knowledge and belief that the physician is able to remove our malady, is the same as the submitting to his prescriptions; and the knowledge and belief that there was safety for the man-slayer in the city of refuge, was the same as an actual flight within its walls.

Solid peace and lasting repose are not so soon, nor so easily found, as this theory supposes. Though Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, and in salvation he is all in all; till the soul is connected with him and interested in him, he can profit us nothing. It is not the knowing or believing that there is a Saviour; but the actual receiving of him that saves the soul. Many, who at one time appeared not far from the kingdom of heaven, have been eternally undone by arriving at peace and comfort far too soon. They have been alarmed for coming wrath, and inquiring after the way of salvation; when they have met with some counsellor unskilful in the word of righteousness; who, instead of teaching them to place their hopes on the foundation laid in Zion, has induced them to rest on a foundation of sand, on a fancy or speculation of his own. Their hurt has been deceitfully healed; and they have begun to cry, Peace, peace, when there

was no peace. Our wisdom is to cease from the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge; and to take care that no man beguile us with enticing words.

“ But when the Scriptures inform us, that whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; that this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; when it adds, he that believeth shall be saved: can I need any thing more to assure me of my salvation, than my consciousness that I believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that I have life in him? Is any thing more than life necessary to convince a man that he is alive? Is any thing more than the presence of the orb of day, requisite to satisfy a man with eyes that it is the sun which he beholds?”

A person asleep, in a swoon, or attacked with apoplexy; is alive, but often unconscious of life. And many a soul, which has been quickened with Christ; has encountered seasons of languor and declension, when it has been unconscious of spiritual life, and suspected that it was still dead in trespasses and sins.

A man in his senses can be at no loss to recognize the sun when he sees it. But many a man has been farthest from his sound judgment, when he most firmly believed that he was in his sober senses; and has been certain that he saw objects, which had no existence. Let the Sun of Righteousness rise on the believer with healing under

his wings: and the Christian can desire no more to convince him that this is his Beloved and his Friend. But is this such an inference as he can draw from the bare announcement of the words, Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God? or, God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son?

It is true that these words are in the Bible. But if we wish to employ them to any valuable purpose, we must attend to their sense and not to their sound. The same Bible says, "If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments:" and adds, "Ye see then how by works a man is justified and not by faith only." But who that attends to the connection in which they stand, and considers the repeated affirmations, that by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified; can for a moment imagine that they were intended to establish the doctrine of justification by our own righteousness?

Many descriptions are given in Scripture of the nature, the acts, and effects of faith. If we look merely at one representation or expression, we shall obtain a very partial, defective, and erroneous notion of its nature. It is only when we take the whole into view, that we can obtain any correct or adequate idea of its real character. To attend only to the assertion, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God;" or to the confession of the Ethiopian convert, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God:" we

should very naturally conclude, that this is the substance and essence of saving faith. But when we take into consideration the words of Paul, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" or look at the question of Philip, to which the declaration of the Ethiopian was a reply, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest:" we find that there is no saving faith but what is unfeigned, or with *all the heart*. Faith is also declared to be the gift of God, the effect of his operation, and possessed by none but those who are born again. John i. 12, 13. Recollecting these things, we may safely affirm that whosoever *believes*, in this acceptation of the term, what is implied in Jesus being the Christ, is born of God. But the man who believes these things merely in a speculative manner, or with a dead faith, is still in his sins.

When John says "This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son:" pray, tell me whether you suppose that this life is *offered* or *possessed*. If you say that it is *possessed*: you are a bold man truly. For since the gifts and callings of God are without repentance; you at once advance the doctrine of universal salvation. You have the effrontery to make God a liar. To the unbeliever God says, that he is dead: but you say, he is alive. God says, he that believeth not shall be damned: but you say that he has eternal life, and shall be saved.

If you say that this life is merely *offered*; then I ask, when is it *possessed*? If you say, *after* we believe: then it is clear that the sinner does not possess it while he is in unbelief: for no man can at once both possess and want the same thing. To believe in such a situation that he has eternal life, is to believe a lie, and to give the lie to that God, who declares, that he that believeth not is condemned already. But if you say that this life is our own *before* we believe: then you proclaim universal salvation; and in the face of all that the Bible affirms of the punishment and perdition of the unbelieving, you maintain their eternal felicity and glory.

The unbeliever does not make God a liar by denying that he has eternal life. This is an awful fact; and were he to believe the contrary he would only insult God, and deceive his own soul. But he makes God a liar when he denies that he has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world, and given him the free offer of salvation through Christ. Without faith we cannot be saved: and, therefore, till once we have faith, it is an absolute impossibility to know that we possess either it or salvation. The cause must be before the effect: faith must exist before its fruits.

“ But when I have faith, what more is necessary to assure me of its existence than my consciousness that I possess it? Can a man exercise faith on Christ without being conscious of the fact?”

Consciousness is merely the knowledge of what is passing in our own minds; and neither gives proof nor symptom of our moral state. It is the perception of our own internal acts and opinions, without deciding on the truth or falsehood of our notions, or the safety or danger of our condition. If our heart has been renewed by grace, and our mind enlightened to perceive the truth as it is in Jesus; the consciousness of this blessed change will fill us with gratitude to our adored Redeemer, and lead us to rejoice in hope of his glory. But if while the heart is still alienated from God, the man has adopted a phantom of his own, which he confidently believes is the gospel: what must be the consequence? He believes, or as he imagines, he knows that it is the gospel that he has adopted. This is a point too clear with him to admit a question: and he will not allow you to start a doubt respecting the authenticity of his gospel. He knows it to be true: and he is conscious that he believes it. He, therefore, necessarily concludes that his state is safe. His former condition was bad. He was then ungodly and graceless. And by mistaking a lie for the truth, does his situation become any better? Provided that he is only confident and dogmatical, is it a matter of indifference whether he believe the truth as it is in Jesus, or a fiction of his own fancy? No: his heart and character are the same: but his prospects are darker, and his case far more desperate than ever. Conceiving that the delusion which

he has embraced is a communication from heaven, he clings to it with all the confidence and tenacity with which a Christian can cleave to the word of the Eternal.

This is a case of frequent occurrence. Multitudes deceive themselves, by thinking that they are something when in reality they are nothing. There never was an enthusiast or heretic yet, who believed that he was counteracting the designs of the Most High, and misleading his brethren to their eternal ruin. Had Brothers the prophet, William Huntington, Joanna Southcot, or Mrs Buchan any more misgivings respecting the truth of their opinions, and the high rank which they enjoyed in the Divine esteem, than the firmest and most unflinching adherent of the Berean system? Are the Papists destitute of a consciousness, that they are most effectually approving themselves the disciples of the merciful Saviour, when they are dyeing themselves deepest in the best blood of his followers? Was Paul without a consciousness of his rectitude, when he “verily thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth?” And were those men acting against their consciousness of moral obligation, who thought that by killing his saints they were doing God service?

Men have been known to change their creed more rapidly than the year could come round. At the commencement of the year, they would not reason with you on the tenets they had espoused.

They knew as completely as if they had heard them pronounced by the lips of the Most High, that they were true; that they were the truth of God. But by the end of the year, they knew as completely that these immutable and eternal verities were a lie. Expositions have been given, where the expounder was conscious that he was unfolding exactly the mind of God, only a little more simply and clearly than the Bible has revealed it; while the comment was at open war with the plain, obvious, grammatical construction of the language of inspiration. Statements have been advanced and appeals made to God for their certainty: which men of better information have at the moment known to be false.

Of all the guides which an infatuated mortal can follow, his own consciousness that he is right, is precisely the worst. It is only his own judgment of his opinions and actions; and in general its decisions are most favourable when he is most egregiously wrong: and in such cases it manifests its power by fool-hardiness and obstinacy. Few men know their own real character. Though the world lies in wickedness, almost every man has a high idea of his own worth. The vain, the proud, the irascible, the covetous, the cruel, the profane, and dissipated; are conscious of their own excellences, and that they are completely the reverse of what the heart-searching God regards them. None are so ignorant, troublesome, and impracticable, as those who fancy that they already know so much,

that there is nothing farther that they can learn. "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: and even a sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason."

Let me, therefore, earnestly entreat all who peruse these pages, seriously to examine the foundation of your own peace and hope. If you are in Christ, you are new creatures. If your state is safe, your iniquities are subdued. If your transgressions are pardoned, they will not have dominion over you: for no faith can save the soul, which does not destroy its sins. If you have the blessings of the gospel for your portion, Jesus will be precious to your hearts and supreme in your esteem. You will know nothing but him: and his love will constrain you to live to his glory. For the gospel was designed to bless us not only with peace but purity, and to make us partakers not merely of the Divine favour but of the Divine nature.

If you have the faith of God's elect, this will appear by your works; and your wisdom is to try your own work of what sort it is.

If you are afraid of self-examination, I tremble for your condition. If your state were safe, you could have no cause to dread investigation. It is dangerous to trifle in a matter of such superlative importance: and it is almost certain destruction to leave the affairs of your souls in a state of suspense. Nothing can more decisively betray a graceless heart, than carelessness and security on a

matter of infinite magnitude and endless duration. "A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident." The ignorant and carnal are bold and presumptuous: but the man of piety is cautious, humble and watchful. He is often searching and trying his heart: and, afraid of self-deception, he carries the matter to God in fervent persevering prayer; saying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Let no man deter you from such an exercise, by the senseless clamour that it is the effect of ignorance, self-righteousness, and carnality. We are as plainly enjoined to examine ourselves, as to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; and are as distinctly informed that the tree is known by its fruits, and that faith without works is dead, as that Jesus is the Christ. It is not more certain that salvation is of grace by faith; than that faith purifieth the heart, worketh by love, overcomes the world, and constrains us to live to him who died for us, and who rose again. If, therefore, we find that our fruits are not the fruits of the Spirit, that our faith is alone, that our hearts are going after their covetousness, that the world is overcoming us, and sloth and indolence besetting us: we have sad reason to conclude that our faith is either dead, false, or feeble.

In a strange country, a guide on whose infor-

mation and integrity we can safely rely, gives us a map, and instructions for the route that we are to take. He tells us of the different objects with which we shall meet in the right road, and the succession and distances at which we shall find them. If in our progress we meet with these objects, we proceed with confidence: not because they give the slightest addition to our conviction of the knowledge and fidelity of our director; for of these we were previously fully assured: but because they satisfy us that we have understood his instructions, and have taken the way which he recommended. But if in the absence of these way-marks; and especially, if at every turn or every step, we are encountering different objects, objects which he told us lay in an opposite direction; to advance with resolution and ardour in such circumstances, so far from manifesting dependence on our guide, in fact proclaims at once our folly and our complete distrust of his judgment and contempt for his authority.

And when God has just as distinctly told us that we are sanctified by faith, and that faith is made perfect by works; as that Christ is the way the truth and the life: when he has just as plainly declared that all unrighteousness is sin, and that the wages of sin are death; as that he that believeth shall be saved: if we find that his grace is teaching us to deny all ungodliness and every worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously and

age, and go on our way rejoicing. This discovery does not give the smallest confirmation to our dependence on the wisdom, love and faithfulness of the God of truth. On these we formerly had the most undoubting reliance. But we now perceive that we understand his counsels, and that his good Spirit is leading us into the land of uprightness. But if instead of being blessed with the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, and not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have our conversation in the world; we know that we are walking in craftiness and handling the word of God deceitfully; that iniquities are prevailing against us, and that we are living according to the course of this world, and not according to the commandments of Christ: are we in such a case boldly to persevere, lest hesitation should betray a legal spirit and a distrust of the wisdom and faithfulness of God! In such a case hesitation bespeaks faith; and perseverance indicates the most insulting scorn for his pleasure, and the most deep-rooted and audacious unbelief.

With the word of God in our hands, denouncing indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil: it is in vain to set off the articles of a creed against the transgressions of the life; or to expect shelter from the consequences of our crimes by the supposed clearness or correctness of our religious tenets. The man who says that he loves God whom he

has not seen; but hates his brother whom he has seen; the man who says he has fellowship with God, but walks in darkness; the man who takes a stipend to manage the affairs of one mercantile concern, but employs his time and talents to ruin it, and advance its rival; the man who takes an oath and receives a salary to preach one form of doctrine, but labours to overturn it and establish another; the man who talks of the punctuality of his religious duties, but is seen staggering home from the tavern at midnight, and, when intoxication has rendered him unable to articulate, has the profanity to outrage the Majesty of heaven by the solemn mockery of family devotion; the man who boasts of his knowledge of the road to glory, while he is bending beneath a load of stolen goods: Can you say that such men are living by faith on the Son of God, and walking even as he also walked? They may declaim as they please about Christ dying for the ungodly, and his blood cleansing from all sin. Facts are stubborn things: and their own deeds too forcibly demonstrate the class to which they belong. They may hold the truth, but it is in unrighteousness; and they are wounding Christ in the house of his worst enemies, though pretended friends.

We read of a strong delusion, as well as a strong faith: and whatever may be his creed, the man who is relying for safety on the notions which he has formed of the gospel, whilst he is

neglecting the humility, the self-denial, and the holiness which it inculcates and inspires; and above all, while he is indulging any of the tempers and practices which God has condemned; shews that he is still in his sins, and that what he mistakes for firm faith is only gross and groundless presumption. We are the friends of Christ, if we do what he says: but it is in vain to call him Lord, and Master, while we refuse to comply with his commands. “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?”

The subject is very far from being exhausted: but it is time to bring these observations to a close.

William Huntington believed that he was one of the only three Ministers in all England, who understood and preached the gospel. The Bereans do not suppose that the gospel is yet more generally known or preached. But unfortunately while they agree in the opinion that they themselves possess a monopoly of Divine truth; they are neither united amongst themselves respecting what that truth is, nor is the same individual at all times consistent with himself.

One identifies faith with knowledge: though elsewhere he very properly informs us, that it is “one of the chief snares and deceptions of our day to mistake the knowledge of religion for religion itself.” When speaking of our being sanc-

tified by faith, and of receiving the spiritual medicine by faith; faith is represented as a reality, and as possessed of some value. But elsewhere it is regarded as a nonentity. "When you read, that men are saved by faith, it does not mean that they are pardoned on account of their faith, or by their faith; no, its meaning is far different, it means that they are pardoned already, *before they thought of it.*"

Ask a Berean, What is humility? He will tell you, "It is another name for the spirit of dependence: it is the feeling of our true condition before God: it is confidence and assured hope: it is another name for spiritual order: it is nothing but truth." What is pardon? "It is just a manifestation of the character of God in relation to sinners: it is another name for holy compassion: it is the seed of the woman: it is God in Christ reconciling the world to himself: it is a manifestation of the Divine character in Christ: it is Jesus Christ." What is repentance? "It is thanksgiving." What is contrition? "It is praise." For what things are we to give thanks? "You are not to thank God only for what is past, but also for what is future."

According to this logic and divinity any thing may be made of the Bible that any man chooses: and, as a friend of mine observed, the angels must be repenting every time that they praise God: and if we must give thanks for what is future, we may also pray for the blessings that we have al-

ready received, and repent of the sins which we have not yet committed.

They inform us that "sin is hell:" and, therefore, when the wicked are said to be turned into hell, this must denote that they are turned into sin: and as they could not be sinners till they were in sin, it must mean that the righteous shall be turned into sin. "Holiness," they say "is heaven." Well then, when we are told that Christ is gone into heaven, it must mean that he has gone into "holiness;" and when he shall come in "the clouds of heaven," he shall come in the clouds of holiness. One of their number adds, "I do not feel persuaded that any man ever received any thing in consequence of his belief of a truth, other than the natural effect of that truth upon his mind." Does the prayer of faith never secure any other thing than the natural effect of the truths which it believes? Were the wonders wrought and the blessings obtained through faith, of which we have such an interesting record in the eleventh of the Hebrews; no more than the natural effect of the truth believed upon the mind? Were the resurrection of the dead, mentioned in the 35th verse, and the translation of Enoch no more than the natural effects of the truths which they believed? Was the life of holiness and bliss which Adam enjoyed in innocence, no more than the natural effect of his belief of what God had spoken? and has he incur-

ed no more by the fall, than the natural consequence of disbelieving the word of God? When Jesus says, “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;” when it is by faith that we receive the presence of the Holy Spirit; that Christ dwells in our hearts; and that we are made partakers of salvation with eternal glory: are these and other blessings such as these, which are beyond all that we can ask or think, no more than the natural effects of the truth that we believe?

To state such assertions seems sufficient to expose their impropriety.

In winding up our remarks, let us review the ground over which we have travelled.

We have seen the great importance of retaining clear ideas of the absolute freeness of the gospel. We have observed, that, however free and gratuitous, salvation cannot be obtained without faith. We found that in contending against every condition, the Bereans unanimously retain them: but by their doctrine of universal pardon and redemption, place these conditions in a position where they are fitted to do unspeakably more injury, than can be apprehended from the evangelical hypothesis. We noticed that, though the invitations of the gospel are unlimited, and the most absolute promises of acceptance are given to all that come to God through Christ; no man is warranted to regard himself as an object of Divine love till he

actually believe on the Son of God. Till then, he is under condemnation and an object of wrath. All men are not only invited to come to Christ; but as positively required to believe on him as to speak truth, and practice justice, honesty, and temperance. In the universal calls and free offers of the gospel, no deception is employed. For every one who obeys these calls, and embraces these offers, shall most infallibly be saved. But those who reject or disregard them, cannot charge God with a breach of promise. They never put his faithfulness to the test. They treat him as if he were false, and a person whose word was not worth their notice. And this is done, not in consequence of inability, but of depravity; not on account of the weakness of their natures, but the wickedness of their hearts.

We have also seen the groundlessness of the notion that all sin was pardoned at the death of Christ. From the patience and forbearance of God towards the impenitent, and his visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children; we were obliged to reject the notion that all sin must either be pardoned, or instantly punished. From the atonement being complete when Christ died, it no more follows that all sin was then forgiven; than, because the purchase of salvation was then finished, all believers were at the same time called, converted, and placed in heaven. We observed that the Scriptures teach us that whenever sin is pardoned, the displeasure of God is removed,

his favour is restored, spiritual blessings are imparted, and salvation inevitably follows. But as these blessings are not enjoyed by the impenitent and graceless, it is clear that their sins are not forgiven. If all sin is pardoned, except unbelief; then it is wrong to preach the gospel to the heathen; as that exposes them to the guilt of unbelief, with which they could not otherwise be chargeable. But if unbelief is likewise forgiven; then either all must be saved, or those who perish must be punished for nothing. The denunciations against the impenitent, and the frequent petitions for pardon, prove that no sin is pardoned till it is repented of and renounced.

If by a state of grace and an interest in Christ, no more is meant than that we live under the gospel dispensation, and enjoy a free offer of salvation; all, at least in Christian countries, may be said to be in such a state, and to enjoy such an interest. But if by these terms we are to understand deliverance from the curse of the law and union to Christ: then, since the Scriptures affirm that unregenerate men are under the curse of the law, and without Christ; they can no more be in a state of grace and interested in Christ, than they can at once be inhabitants of the Earth and of Jupiter.

We found that the Scriptures represent men by nature as in a state, not of acceptance and safety, but of condemnation and danger. The prophets and apostles reasoned with their hearers, not about

their redemption and being beloved of God, but about their guilt and danger: and exhorted them, not to rejoice that their sins were pardoned and Christ was theirs, but to repent and be converted. And so far is prayer for spiritual blessings from being forbidden, as implying a denial of the all-sufficiency of the atonement and the freeness of salvation, that it is exemplified and enjoined. Prayer for an interest in Christ no more infringes the sufficiency of his righteousness and the freeness of his grace; than prayer for admission into heaven implies a denial of the existence of the world of glory.

We could discover no proof that Christ died for all: and were, therefore, unable to regard such a proposition as the object of saving faith. The doctrinal object of saving faith is the revelation which the Scriptures contain of Christ; and saving faith is such a belief of the truth as leads the soul to trust in him for its own salvation, to love him supremely, and live to him wholly. The most eminent saints have often been destitute of the assurance of salvation: and professors, who were in the greatest jeopardy have been frequently most confident of their own safety. We were, therefore, unable to assent to the assertion that assurance is essential to faith and inseparable from grace.

But if the preceding pages have shewn that this system is false: it must be added, that, however pure and laudable the intentions of its abettors,

their principles are not only groundless but pernicious. Under the idea of magnifying the love of God, they give such a view of the Divine benevolence as manifests an ineffectual good will to all, but secures salvation to none. To render salvation free and accessible to the whole human race, they introduce such a scheme of salvation as may be possessed without faith in Christ; and in the expectation of giving peace and joy to the Christian, encourage the impenitent and hardened to rejoice in the notion that they are redeemed and pardoned.

Instead of leading sinners to the Saviour and teaching them to receive him and his righteousness as the foundation of their trust: in direct opposition to the whole letter and spirit of the word of God; they exhort those, who are already undoing themselves by crying peace, peace, when there is no peace, to cry more loudly, and to rejoice in Christ and his salvation as their own.

At the very time that they fancy that they are doing signal honour to the riches of grace; in consequence of denying that Christ infallibly procured faith and every spiritual blessing for all in whose behalf he died, they lay a foundation for self-righteousness and the overthrow of grace altogether, by making the sinner the author of his own conversion. By rejecting the imputation of our sins to Christ and the satisfactory nature of his sufferings; they ally themselves with the So-

cinians, and prepare the way for exploding entirely the doctrine of the atonement.

If he that keeps the whole law, and yet offends in one point is guilty of all; it seems naturally to follow, that he who refuses submission to the dictates of revelation in one article is chargeable with disowning its authority entirely. The fearless freedom with which they have adopted and propagated dogmas in direct opposition, as we have seen, to both the letter and spirit of the sacred volume; is sufficient to make the friends of religion tremble. Such a spirit, consistently followed out, will speedily lead to the total renunciation of the oracles of God.

And when revelation is abandoned, and infidelity broadly and openly avowed; what kind of being will they reserve for their God? Is he like the God of the Bible? glorious in holiness, who cannot look upon sin? who will sooner make heaven and earth pass away, than allow his word to pass? Is he a God, of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things? No: he is a God without holiness, without justice, without knowledge or power. They tell us that there is "nothing but love in God." The ultimate object too of this love, is the welfare of fallen and guilty creatures. But though supremely solicitous to secure their happiness and holiness; in many cases his wishes are defeated. They talk of his "notions" of things; and of his having given us "all that in his apprehension was necessary for our salva-

tion:" and yet, notwithstanding this, many perish. After this it is lamentable, but not wonderful to hear of them "sympathising with him in his wishes and desires."

It is alarming to contemplate the natural tendency of such tenets. It is dangerous to try how much poison we can bear. Though a sound constitution may survive the process, many must fall victims to the experiment. And it is hazardous to trifle with revealed truth, and to try how far it may be blended with error, before we make complete shipwreck of the faith: for though God may preserve those, who have received any portion of the truth in love, from final apostacy; little hope can be entertained of those who are year after year wandering farther and farther from the words of sound doctrine; and who instead of being reclaimed by the friendly counsels of their brethren are provoked to become worse and worse. These will not long rest at the notions of universal pardon and redemption: but, like their predecessors, boldly advance to all the awful but legitimate consequences of the system, universal salvation, the abrogation of the law as a rule of life, and the liberty of every man to live according to his pleasure.

Let those who are not yet tainted with the plausible, but ruinous heresy, be entreated to be on their guard. Cease to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge. Search the Scriptures. Call no man master, for

one is your Master, even Christ. Let your study of the Scriptures be accompanied with humility, diligence, and prayer. While we are reading and pondering, life is leaving us, and eternity is rushing on. Behold the Judge standeth before the door.

We conclude the whole with the following extracts from the Confession of Faith:—

“ALL those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

“This effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man; who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.”

“THOSE whom God effectually calleth he also

freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone: not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience, to them as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith: which faith they have not of themselves; it is the gift of God.

“ Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.

“ Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those who are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf. Yet, in as much as he was given by the Father for them, and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for any thing in them, their justification is only of free grace; that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.

“ God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect; and Christ did, in the fulness

of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification: nevertheless they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth in due time actually apply Christ unto them.

“God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified: and although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may by their sins fall under God’s fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.”

“THE grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the word: by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened.

“By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word, for the authority of God himself speaketh therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are, accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.

“ This faith is different in degrees, weak or strong; may be often and many ways assailed and weakened, but gets the victory; growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith.”

“ **ALTHOUGH** hypocrites, and other unregenerate men, may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favour of God and estate of salvation; which hope of theirs shall perish; yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, endeavouring to walk in all good conscience before him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in a state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; which hope shall never make them ashamed.

“ This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith, founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God: which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.

“ This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many dif-

faculties, before he be partaker of it: yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto. And, therefore, it is the duty of every one to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure; that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance: so far is it from inclining men to looseness.

“ True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as, by negligence in preserving of it; by falling into some special sin, which woundeth the conscience, and grieveth the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation; by God’s withdrawing the light of his countenance, and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness, and to have no light: yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may in due time be revived, and by the which, in the mean time, they are supported from utter despair.” Chap. x. Sec. 1, 2: xi. 1—5: xiv. xviii.

ERRATUM.

Page 17, line 6, for impassible read *impassable*.







